S. HRG. 110–70

HEARING ON THE FILIPINO VETERANS EQUITY ACT OF 2007

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

APRIL 11, 2007

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HEARING ON THE FILIPINO VETERANS EQUITY ACT OF 2007

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2007

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:01 a.m., in room 418, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Daniel K. Akaka, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Akaka, Murray, and Craig.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL K. AKAKA, CHAIRMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII

Chairman AKAKA. The Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the U.S. Senate will come to order.

This hearing will be on the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007. Aloha. I am very pleased to welcome all of the witnesses to this long-awaited hearing on the veterans' status of Filipinos who fought along the United States military during World War II. I thank especially those of you who have traveled so far, over long distances, to be with us today.

I would like to begin by calling my close friend, my colleague from Hawaii, United States Senator Dan Inouye, who is the sponsor of S. 57. Senator Inouye?

STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL K. INOUYE, U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII

Senator INOUYE. Thank you very much for your invitation to come before your Committee to speak in strong support of the measure before us. I wish to commend you and the Members for holding this hearing on the Filipino Veterans Equity bill. I think the title should be Filipino Veterans Justice bill. It is to do justice. It is my sincere hope that we will be successful in the passage of this bill during this Congress.

Many of you know of my continued advocacy on the importance of addressing the plight of the Filipino World War II veterans, all of whom are in their twilight years. As an American, I believe the treatment of Filipino World War II veterans is bleak and shameful. It is time that we as a Nation recognize our longstanding history and friendship with the Filipinos.

Of the 120,000 that served in the Commonwealth Army during World War II, there are approximately 60,000 Filipino veterans recently residing in the United States and the Philippines. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Filipino veteran popu-

lation is expected to decrease to approximately 20,000, or roughly one-third of the current population, by 2010.

Historically, the Philippines became a United States possession in 1898 when it was ceded by Spain following the Spanish-American War. In 1934, the Congress enacted the Philippines Independence Act, which provided a 10-year time frame for the independence of the Philippines. Between 1934 and the final independence in 1946, the United States retained certain powers over the Philippines, including the right to call military forces organized by the newly formed Commonwealth Government into the service of the United States Armed Forces.

The Commonwealth Army of the Philippines was called to serve with the United States Armed Forces in the Far East during World War II under President Roosevelt's July 26, 1941 military order, which was the law of the land. The Filipinos who served were entitled to full veterans' benefits by reason of their active service in our armed forces. Hundreds were wounded in battle and many more hundreds died in battle.

Shortly after Japan's surrender, the Congress enacted the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945 for the purpose of sending Filipino troops to occupy enemy lands and to oversee military installations at various overseas bastions. These troops were authorized to receive pay and allowances for services performed throughout the Western Pacific. Although hostilities had ceased, wartime service of these troops continued as a matter of law until the end of 1946.

Despite all of their sacrifices, on February 18, 1946, a dark day, the Congress passed the Rescission Act of 1946, now codified as Section 107 of Title 38 of the United States Code. The 1946 Act deemed that the service performed by these Filipino veterans would not be recognized as active service for the purpose of any U.S. law conferring rights, privileges, or benefits. Accordingly, Section 107 denied Filipino veterans access to health care, particularly for their armed service-connected disabilities, and pension benefits. Section 107 also limited service-connected disability and death compensation for Filipino veterans to 50 percent of what their American counterparts received.

On May 27, 1946, the Congress enacted the Second Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act, which duplicated the language that eliminated Filipino veterans' benefits under the First Rescission Act. Thus, Filipino veterans who fought in the service of the United States during World War II have been precluded from receiving most of the veterans' benefits that had been available to them before 1946 and that are available to all other veterans of our armed forces, regardless of race, national origin, or citizenship
status.

Throughout the years, I have sponsored several measures to rectify the lack of appreciation America has shown to these gallant men and women who stood in harm's way with our American soldiers and fought the common enemy during World War II. These benefits include veterans' health care, service-connected disability compensation, non-service-connected disability compensation, de-

pendent indemnity compensation, death pension, and full burial benefits.

As a result of a citizenship statute enacted by the Congress in 1990, some Filipino veterans who were able to travel came to the United States to become U.S. citizens. At the same time, many other Filipino World War II veterans were unable to travel to the U.S. and take advantage of the naturalization benefit because of their advanced age.

The law was subsequently amended under the Fiscal Year 1993 Departments of State, Justice, Commerce, and the Judiciary Appropriations Act to allow the naturalization process for these veterans to occur in the Philippines. Since then, a distinction has been made to provide benefits to only those Filipino veterans residing in the United States.

I believe it is unfair to make a distinction between those residing in the U.S. versus those residing in the Philippines. Under President Roosevelt's July 26, 1941 military order, the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines served with the United States Armed Forces in the Far East.

Together, these gallant men and women stood in harm's way with our American soldiers to fight our common enemies in World War II. I strongly urge the Committee not to make a distinction between the Filipino veterans in the U.S. and the Filipino veterans residing in the Philippines. After all, an injury is just as painful in the Philippines as it is in the United States.

Because all Filipino veterans stood in equal jeopardy during World War II, I do not believe we should have a distinction drawn based on the current residency in the U.S. or in the Philippines. All of them were at equal risk and so all should receive equal benefits.

Heroes should never be forgotten or ignored. Let us not turn our backs on those who sacrificed so much. Let us instead work to repay all of those brave men for their sacrifices by providing them the veterans' benefits they deserve.

Thank you very much for your consideration on this matter, and Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I stand ready to work with you toward the passage of this much-deserved and much-needed legislation for the Filipino veterans of World War II.

I thank you very much, sir.

[Applause.]

Chairman AKAKA. Senator Daniel K. Inouye, recipient of the Medal of Honor of the United States, one who is ranked number three in the U.S. Senate, one who has introduced the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007 that would constitute the granting of veterans' benefits and status to the Filipino veterans who served under U.S. command during the Second World War.

Senator Inouye, thank you very much for your testimony and your bill that we will be talking about today. Thank you very much, and with much Aloha.

Senator INOUYE. Sir, I thank you very much, and Senator Craig, I thank you, sir.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you. I know you are busy and we will go on with the hearing now, but again——

Senator INOUYE. Chairman, if you will excuse me, we have an Armed Services Committee meeting.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you. Thank you very much, Senator INOUYE.

[Applause.]

Chairman AKAKA. I want you to know that we have many who are attending this hearing today and we have an overflow room—that is Room 432 on this floor—that has room for you in case you want to sit down. There is a screen there so that you can watch what is happening in this room. It is Room 432.

In the 62 years since the end of the Second World War, Filipino veterans have worked tirelessly to secure the veterans' status they were promised when they agreed to fight under U.S. command in defense of their homeland and to protect U.S. interests in the region. Today, I am happy to say many Filipino veterans enjoy eligibility for benefits and health care services as U.S. veterans.

However, as our distinguished witnesses here today will remind us, there is still work to be done in order to extend these eligibilities to all of those who served alongside the United States military during World War II. There remains a distinction in law between those Filipino veterans who served in the old Philippine Scouts and those who served in the Filipino Commonwealth Army, the recognized guerilla forces or the New Philippine Scouts.

Unlike those who served as old Philippine Scouts, those in the other three groups are not eligible for all VA benefits under the same criteria that applies to veterans of U.S. military service, and perhaps more importantly, this means they are not officially acknowledged by the U.S. Government as true veterans.

My colleague and good friend from Hawaii, Senator Daniel Inouye, has introduced legislation which will end this distinction and, at long last, recognize these honorable and brave men as U.S. veterans of World War II. Senator Inouye's bill, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007, would constitute the final gesture in granting full veteran status to the brave Filipinos who served under U.S. command during the Second World War.

There is a long and amiable history between the United States and the Filipinos dating back to 1898, when the Philippine Islands were ceded from Spain following the Spanish-American War. When called upon by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to fight under U.S. command against the Japanese invasion, the organized Armed Forces of the Philippines fought bravely and honorably. They fought for the cause of freedom, their own independence, and out of loyalty to the United States.

In the decades since the end of World War II and the establishment of the Independent Republic of the Philippines, the tradition of goodwill between the people of the United States and the Philippines has continued. In my home State of Hawaii, I have seen firsthand the invaluable contributions that Filipino Americans have made to the rich cultural texture of this country.

The Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007 would honor the service of all Filipino veterans of World War II by formally recognizing the contribution of our Filipino veteran brethren from, "the greatest generation." This hearing is an important first step toward that recognition.

I again thank our witnesses for joining us and look forward to today's hearing. I want to thank you, all of those of you here of Philippine ancestry. Mabuhay.

[Applause.]

[The prepared statement of Chairman Akaka follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL K. AKAKA, CHAIRMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII

Aloha. In the sixty-two years since the end of the Second World War, Filipino veterans have worked tirelessly to secure the veterans status they were promised when they agreed to fight under U.S. command in defense of their homeland and to protect U.S. interests in the region. Today, I am happy to say, many Filipino veterans enjoy eligibility to benefits and health care services as U.S. veterans. However, as our distinguished witnesses here today will remind us, there is still work to be done in order to extend these eligibilities to all of those who served alongside the United States military during the World War II.

There remains a distinction in law between those Filipino veterans who served in the Old Philippine Scouts and those who served in the Filipino Commonwealth Army, the Recognized Guerilla forces, or the New Philippine Scouts. Unlike those who served as Old Philippine Scouts, those in the other three groups are not eligible for all VA benefits under the same criteria that applies to veterans of U.S. military service. And, perhaps more importantly, this means they are not officially acknowledged by the United States government as true veterans.

My colleague and good friend from Hawaii, Senator Daniel Inouye, has introduced legislation which will end this distinction and, at long last, recognize and honor these brave men as U.S. veterans of World War II. Senator Inouye's bill, the "Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007" would constitute the final gesture in granting full veteran status to the brave Filipinos who served under U.S. command during the Second World War.

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The Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007 would honor the service of all Filipino veterans of World War II by formally recognizing the contributions of our Filipino brethren from the "Greatest Generation." This hearing is an important first step in that recognition coming to fruition.

Chairman AKAKA. Senator Craig?

STATEMENT OF HON. LARRY E. CRAIG, RANKING MEMBER, U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO

Senator CRAIG. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to all of our witnesses this morning and all who are in attendance, both here and, I understand, as Danny has just expressed, remotely.

Mr. Chairman, you have already described the great services rendered by our friends from the Philippine Islands during World War II. That service is undeniable, and the legal record and the obligations from that record are also undeniable. That service is a fact. It is a historic fact that victory in the Pacific would not have been assured without the help of our Filipino friends and our Filipino-American citizens.

I will not attempt to expand on what you have already said and what we will later hear from our guests this morning. The ultimate

question we must grapple with in this Committee is 62 years after World War II, has the U.S. Government met its obligation to Filipino veterans who fought under U.S. command during that war?

When distinguished veterans of this Senate and of that war, Senator Inouye and Senator Akaka, put their name on legislation which suggests we have not met that obligation, that is an alert to all of us here that something is amiss. That, in fact, we should strive to do better for our Filipino veterans. That is, I believe, a responsibility and an obligation, and that is my position, Mr. Chairman. We should strive to do better for the Filipino veterans and I will work with you to that end.

Let me turn, then, to the issue of whether S. 57 represents the best way to accomplish our collective goal. As you know, S. 57 would grant full VA benefits to Filipino veterans. There are several issues that prevent me from endorsing the legislation at this time.

First, while Filipino veterans were certainly U.S. nationals at the time of the war, a fact which heightens our obligation to them, they were also on a path to full independence as members of a sovereign nation. Yes, they fought for the U.S. interest against a common enemy, but they also fought for their own homeland. As such, I believe the governments of the Philippines and the United States collectively share responsibility for the care of these veterans.

As I understand it, the Filipino Government pays $100 a month to Filipino veterans. I have also learned that should V.A. benefits be expanded on their behalf, that the Filipino Government would offset their $100 monthly payment. Mr. Chairman, I find that unacceptable. I am interested in improving benefits to Filipino veterans, not in merely shifting funding obligations from one nation's taxpayers to another.

Second, it is a fact that the standard of living of our two countries is vastly different. VA pension benefits paid to veterans residing in the United States barely gets household income above the poverty level. The same benefit paid to veterans residing in the Philippines would provide income that is almost four times the average household income of that country. I am very concerned about creating a situation where the relative value of the same benefits is so vastly different.

Third, the price tag of S. 57 is large, almost $1 billion over 10 years by some estimates. The Congress's budget rules require us to find offsets for that new spending. During a time of war and fiscal restraint, how will the costs of S. 57 be met?

And finally, we have several bills pending before this Committee that seek to expand benefits to veterans of the War on Terror. Our country has no higher priority than to assure that those returning from war with traumatic brain injuries, severe burns, and amputations have the best benefits and care available. These bills also have tremendous costs. I want to make sure that in our goal to expand benefits for Filipino veterans within our existing resources, we also give appropriate priority to others in need.

So, Mr. Chairman, I see that as our collective challenge in meeting an obligation and a responsibility that is represented in S. 57 and I will work with you to resolve this issue. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Senator Craig. I want you to know that Senator Craig and I have worked well together on this Committee and we will continue to do our best. We look forward to continuing this friendship and the kind of work that we do.

We are fortunate to have with us today the Ambassador from the Philippines, Ambassador Gaa. He is accompanied by retired Major General Delfin N. Lorenzana, head of the Office of Veterans' Affairs for the Philippine Embassy. We are pleased that you can join us today to share your perspective, Ambassador Gaa, on the role of the Filipino military personnel during World War II.

Ambassador Gaa, your complete statement will appear in the Committee's hearing record. Ambassador Gaa?

STATEMENT OF HON. H.E. WILLY C. GAA, PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES; ACCOMPANIED BY MAJOR GENERAL DELFIN N. LORENZANA (RET.), HEAD, OFFICE OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS, PHILIPPINE EMBASSY

Ambassador GAA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. Thank you for your kind invitation for us to appear before the Committee. We deeply appreciate the opportunity to share with you the views of the Philippine Government on an issue of great importance to my country and to the Filipino people.

Victory for allied forces marked the end of the war in the Pacific. At war's end, though battered by years of fighting and with the memories of their fallen comrades etched in their hearts, our veterans rejoiced and savored the sweet taste of victory. Little did they know that while the carnage and destruction of war had ended, they would be facing a new battle, one where victory would be far more elusive.

It would be a battle where time, not bullets, would ravage their ranks. It would be a fight where the pain of inequity, not the bayonet charges of the enemy, would force them to once again witness their comrades fall one by one. This would be a quest for victory that would once more demand that they give the full measure of courage and sacrifice they had unselfishly shown in the trenches of Bataan and Corregidor, in the jungles and mountains throughout the archipelago, and on the crimson roads of the Death March.

Today, few of these living symbols of the very freedoms and liberties that we now enjoy remain. By the end of this month, many more would have fallen. But they have not been alone in this quest for a final victory.

Many in the U.S. Congress have stood boldly by our brave soldiers. Their profound sense of history and commitment to the common values that both our countries share and have fought for have given all of us renewed hope for justice, fairness, and equity.

In this quest, Filipino American groups, U.S. veterans' organizations like the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Vietnam Veterans of America, and as well as individuals have also marched unflinchingly side-by-side with our veterans. Many of these groups and individuals are with us today and we thank them for their invaluable and tireless work and for their commitment and dedication.

Mr. Chairman, the Philippine Government and the Filipino people continue to maintain that the Filipino soldiers who fought and served under the U.S. Army during World War II, specifically during the period between July 1941 to October 1945, are U.S. veterans under then-existing U.S. laws and are entitled to all benefits due a U.S. veteran.

We therefore welcome the filing and urge the passage of S. 57 and its companion bill in the House, H.R. 716, into law, to amend Section 107 of Title 38, United States Code, to deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. We make this call based on assertions that are supported by clear facts and historical records. I have attached to this statement a reiteration of our arguments and I respectfully request that this be made part of the record.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, Filipino World War II veterans were treated unfairly by the 79th Congress and the U.S. Government in 1946 by the enactment of P.L. 79–301, otherwise known as the Rescission Act of 1946.

At a critical juncture in both our countries' history, Filipino veterans had willingly responded to the urgent call and order of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. They readily left their families and homes for an uncertain fate. They fought valiantly, bravely, and with uncommon courage. They went into combat against great odds and often lacking the support that they had been promised.

Out of the 470,000 reported by the VA in 1946, less than 20,000 remain by 2010, as mentioned by Senator Inouye earlier, 13,000 in the Philippines and 7,000 in the United States. Those who remain have very little time left. Many are sick and infirm.

Two days ago, we marked the 65th anniversary of the Fall of Bataan with even more vacant spaces among the ranks of the veterans. We commemorate that fateful date not in the spirit of defeat but as a symbol of immense courage in the face of great odds and as a day that held for us the promise of a victory.

Mr. Chairman, I ask on behalf of a nation that has stood by yours in the name of freedom, liberty, and democracy in World War II, in the decades of uncertainty after, and in facing today's new and great challenges, to let these old soldiers have their final victory. We ask that they be allowed to end this last chapter of a war they had fought so hard to win with their dignity intact and with the honor that they so truly deserve. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Gaa follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. H.E. WILLY C. GAA,
PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

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It would be battle where time, not bullets would ravage their ranks.

It would be a fight where the pain of inequity, not the bayonet charges of the enemy, would force them to once again witness their comrades fall, one by one.

This would be a quest for victory that would once more demand that they give the full measure of courage and sacrifice they had unselfishly shown in the trenches of Bataan and Corregidor, in the jungles and mountains throughout the archipelago and on the crimson roads of the Death March.

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But they have not been alone in this quest for a final victory.

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Many of these groups and individuals are with us today, and we thank them for their invaluable and tireless work and for their commitment and dedication.

Mr. Chairman, the Philippine Government and the Filipino people continue to maintain that the Filipino soldiers who fought and served under the U.S. Army during WWII, specifically during the period between July 1941 to October 1945, are U.S. veterans under then existing U.S. laws and are entitled to all benefits due a U.S. veteran.

We therefore welcome the filing and urge the passage of S. 57 and its companion bill in the House, H.R. 760 into law, "to amend Section 107 of title 38, United States Code to deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs."

We make this call based on assertions that are supported by clear facts and historical records.

I have attached to this statement a reiteration of our arguments and respectfully request that these be made part of the record.

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At a critical juncture in both our countries' history, Filipino veterans had willingly responded to the urgent call of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

They readily left their families and homes for an uncertain fate.

They fought valiantly, bravely and with uncommon courage. They went into combat against great odds and often lacking the support that they had been promised.

Out of the 470,000 reported by the VA in 1946 less than 20,000 remain—13,000 in the Philippines and 7,000 in the United States.

Those who remain have very little time left. Many are sick and infirm.

I ask, on behalf of a nation that has stood by yours in the name of freedom, liberty and democracy in World War II, in the decades of uncertainty after, and in facing today's new and grave challenges, to let these old soldiers have their final victory.

We ask that they be allowed to end this last chapter of a war they had fought so hard to win—with their dignity intact and with the honor that they so truly deserve.

Thank you.

LEGAL, MORAL AND HISTORICAL BASIS FOR FILIPINO VETERANS FULL EQUITY

We have based our arguments on the following facts verifiable from U.S. Congress archives:

1. *The Philippines was then a Colony of the U.S.*—The Philippines was then a colony of the U.S. and the U.S. President, under the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 (also known as the Philippine Independence Act of 1934) was vested with the authority to call the Philippine Commonwealth Army and other forces so organized to

serve under the U.S. Army. This power was exercised by President Franklin Roosevelt on July 26, 1941.

2. *The U.S. Assumed Command of All Forces*—Shortly thereafter, General MacArthur having been designated the Commander of the newly organized United States Army Forces in the Far East, with Headquarters in Manila, issued an order assuming command of all U.S. Army Forces in the Philippines including the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines.

3. *Public Law 79–301 was Grossly Unfair*—On February 18, 1946, barely 5 months before the scheduled independence of the Philippines, Public Law 79–301, now famously known as the Rescission Act of 1946, was enacted into law. Included in this rider was the appropriation of $200M to the Philippine Army with the proviso that "service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines while such forces were in the service of the armed forces of the United States pursuant to the military order of the President of the United States dated July 26, 1941, shall not be deemed to be or to have been service in the military or naval forces of the U.S. or any component thereof for any law of the U.S. conferring rights, privileges or benefits upon any such person by reason of service of such person or any other person in the military or naval forces of the U.S. or any component thereof."

4. *Key U.S. Officials Admitted Eligibility for Equity*—During the hearing for Public Law 79–301 the head of the U.S. Veterans' Administration was called to testify. His testimony included the following: there were 472,000 Filipino WWII veterans in 1946, they were eligible to VA benefits (THE SERVICE OF THE FILIPINO COMMONWEALTH ARMY INTO THE U.S. ARMED SERVICES DURING WWII HAVE MET THE STATUTORY DEFINITION OF A U.S. VETERAN), and it would cost the U.S. $3.2B to cover Filipino WWII Veterans on equal basis with their American counterparts.

5. *Statement of President Harry S. Truman Clearly Recognized that Filipino Veterans Deserved Equity*—Before signing P.L. 79–301 into law, President Harry S. Truman stated:

a. The effect of this rider is to bar Philippine Army veterans from all benefits under the GI Bill of Rights with the exception of disability and death benefits.

b. The passage and approval of this legislation does not release the U.S. from its moral obligation to provide for the heroic Philippine veterans who sacrificed so much for the common cause during the war.

c. Philippine Army veterans are nationals of the U.S. and will continue in that status until July 4, 1946. They fought as American nationals, under the American flag, and under the direction of our military leaders.

d. He considers it a moral obligation of the United States to look after the welfare of the Philippine Army veterans.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Ambassador Gaa, for your testimony.

I have some questions for you, Ambassador. My first question is, what benefits does your government currently provide to World War II Filipino veterans?

Ambassador GAA. As mentioned by Senator Craig, the Philippine Government is extending old-age pension in the amount of approximately $100. They have also access to the Veterans' Memorial Medical Center in the Philippines.

Chairman AKAKA. Ambassador Gaa, if the United States were to pay non-service-connected pension to all eligible Filipino veterans who served with the U.S. forces during World War II, would your government offset this benefit against any benefits that are already paid to these veterans?

Ambassador GAA. Mr. Chairman, I have to be frank with you. We have legislation which states that a veteran who is at least 65 years old shall be paid an old-age pension of 500 pesos monthly, or it is now 5,000 pesos, unless he is actually receiving a similar pension for the same consideration from other government funds or from the U.S. Government. Now, unless this is repealed, then there will be an offset. But let me assure you, Mr. Chairman, that my predecessor as well as myself have written our government that

this grant be continued even after this government has extended benefits to these veterans.

Chairman AKAKA. I thank you very much for your responses.

Senator Craig?

Senator CRAIG. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ambassador, welcome before the Committee and thank you for your testimony. You have already responded to one of my questions that I broached in my opening comments that I think would be a concern, because I view the responsibility here as somewhat equal amongst nations, because while, as I said in my opening statement, yes, you fought as U.S. troops, I think there was a joint obligation and understanding and sense that you were also fighting to free a homeland. As a result of that, of course, you became independent. That was well underway at the time, from the 1930s on. So I am pleased with your response and I would hope that that is something that we could see moving in the form of legislation in the Philippines.

One other question. I also commented on the difference in the cost of living in both the Philippines and the United States, and while I understand obligation no matter where the person resides, because we are talking about individuals who have been lifelong residents within the Philippines themselves, if the Committee were to extend benefits for the Filipino veteran residing in the Philippines, would you support our taking into account at least the differences in the cost of living of the two countries involved?

Ambassador GAA. Well, Mr. Chairman, Senator Craig, that is something I would have to consult with the veterans. But personally, I would support legislation that would recognize the different economic conditions but also the legislation that would recognize the long historical friendship between the Philippines and the United States as well as the sacrifices of our Filipino veterans. That has to be taken comprehensively, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CRAIG. And last, Mr. Chairman, Ambassador, you said that the veteran currently in the Philippines receives $100 a month and access to health care or a health care system?

Ambassador GAA. It is access to the Veterans Memorial Medical Center, Mr. Chairman, Senator Craig, but that is only access.

Senator CRAIG. Access——

Ambassador GAA. They have to pay their own medicines and all that.

Senator CRAIG. So it is not full benefits——

Ambassador GAA. That is not full benefits——

Senator CRAIG [continuing].—delivered from that system?

Ambassador GAA. Yes.

Senator CRAIG. Thank you. That helps me.

Ambassador GAA. Thank you.

Senator CRAIG. Thank you both very much.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you, Senator Craig.

I want to thank you, Ambassador, for your presence here. We really appreciate your statement and want to wish you well. Also, I want to mention that on April 9, the Philippines had a national holiday where they commemorated Corregidor and Bataan and also the Death March during World War II. You had a celebration there in the Philippines and I wanted to note that at this time.

Again, Mr. Ambassador, thank you so much. I want to wish you and your country well in the 21st century. We look forward to considering Senator Inouye's bill. Again, thank you very much.

Ambassador GAA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for your kind remarks.

Chairman AKAKA. Aloha.

Ambassador GAA. Aloha.

[Applause.]

Chairman AKAKA. On behalf of the Committee, I welcome our witnesses from the VA to the second panel: Mr. Ronald Aument, Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits; Mr. Jack Thompson, Deputy General Counsel; and Dr. Robert Wiebe, the Director of VA's Health Care Network that includes Hawaii.

Good to see you again.

I want to thank each of you for being here today. I also want to place in the record that Senator Reid has cosponsored S. 57 and has submitted a statement for the record.

Chairman AKAKA. Again, it is good to have you here and I want you to know that your full statement will appear in the record of the hearing.

Mr. Aument?

STATEMENT OF RONALD R. AUMENT, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR BENEFITS, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS; ACCOMPANIED BY ROBERT WIEBE, DIRECTOR, VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORK 21, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS; AND JOHN H. THOMPSON, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL, DEPARTMENT VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. AUMENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Craig, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today on S. 57, a bill that would deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for the purpose of benefits under programs administered by VA.

I am accompanied today by Dr. Robert Wiebe and Mr. Jack Thompson.

The VA has great respect for the bravery and service of Philippine soldiers and for their partnership with the U.S. military in defending freedom. I am personally privileged to have met some of the Filipino veterans present here today for this hearing, Mr. Chairman, and I thank them for their service.

We are pleased that our office in Manila works tirelessly to provide benefits to those eligible, with the result that an average of $12.5 million is paid each month to veterans resident in the Philippines. These funds not only benefit the veterans themselves, but also contribute to the economic growth of the Philippines.

For purposes of VA benefits and services, members of the Philippine Armed Forces can be categorized into four separate groups: Regular Philippine Scouts, Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, recognized guerilla units, and New Philippine Scouts. Veterans who served in the regular Philippine Scouts have always qualified for the full range of VA benefits and services as veterans of the United States Armed Forces and they are not affected by

this bill. For the other categories of Filipino veterans, S. 57 would extend full eligibility for VA benefits.

Congress limited the rates of disability and death compensation to the equivalent of 50 cents on the U.S. dollar and did not authorize eligibility for VA needs-based pension, health care, or readjustment of benefits for veterans of the Commonwealth Army, recognized guerilla units, and the New Philippine Scouts. Legislative history indicates that benefits were limited to 50 cents on the dollar in recognition of the different standards of living in the United States and the Philippines, and Congress also anticipated that the newly independent Republic of the Philippines would rightly assume additional responsibilities for its veterans.

We are very pleased that Congress has in recent years improved the benefits for those facing living expenses comparable to United States veterans. We believe these improvements were extremely important, as they allowed the VA to maintain parity in the provision of veterans' benefits among similarly situated Filipino beneficiaries.

Filipino veterans who lawfully reside in the United States and are United States citizens or aliens lawfully admitted for permanent residency in the United States now qualify for disability compensation at the full U.S. dollar rate. They also have eligibility for VA health care and burial benefits similar to other veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Service-connected World War II Filipino veterans residing in the United States can obtain hospital and outpatient medical services for any condition on the same basis as veterans of the U.S. forces. The United States has also provided assistance to the Philippines in a number of different ways to facilitate the provision of medical care to World War II Filipino veterans.

While we are grateful for the military service and the sacrifices these Filipino veterans made during World War II, VA does not support enactment of this bill because it would disproportionately favor Filipino veterans over U.S. veterans.

In 2003, the average annual family income in the Philippines in U.S. dollars was approximately $2,864. In contrast, the maximum annual pension rate in 2006 for a veteran with no dependents was $10,928 per year. The annual rate for a veteran with one dependent was $14,313, and the annual rate for a surviving spouse with no dependents was $7,329.

Thus, Filipino veterans and their survivors receiving full-rate VA pensions while living in the Philippines would enjoy a much higher standard of living relative to the general population in the Philippines. At the same time, VA benefits paid to beneficiaries living in the United States, such as U.S. veterans, do not enable those beneficiaries to enjoy a standard of living higher than the general U.S. population.

Assuming that the amendments that S. 57 would make would become effective on January 1, 2007, we estimate additional benefits cost, including medical benefits and memorial benefits, of approximately $510 million in the first year and more than $4 billion over 10 years. Administrative costs are estimated at around $8.8 million in the first year and $27 million over 10 years. These estimates of administrative costs do not include the capital security cost sharing

cost or administrative costs related to the provision of health care. Both the benefit and administrative costs include costs related to the three most financially significant benefits that would be afforded by this bill, which are disability compensation, pension, and DIC benefits. At this time, we do not have estimates that include costs related to any other benefits.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman, and I would be happy to entertain any questions from you or other Members of the Committee.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Aument follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RONALD R. AUMENT, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR BENEFITS, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on S. 57, a bill that would deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). VA does not support enactment of the bill.

Regular, or "Old," Philippine Scouts are currently eligible for VA benefits in the same manner as veterans of the U.S. Army. Therefore, the bill would not affect this group. However, S. 57 would extend full eligibility for VA benefits to veterans of the Philippine Commonwealth Army, including those with recognized guerrilla service, and to veterans of the New Philippine Scouts. In my testimony today, I refer only to the groups affected by the proposed bill as "Filipino veterans" and do not refer to Regular Philippine Scouts.

Section 107 of title 38, United States Code, generally limits the VA benefits to which Filipino veterans and their survivors are eligible to certain contracts of National Service Life Insurance, disability compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC), and monetary burial benefits. Furthermore, unless those veterans or survivors live in the United States and are U.S. citizens or are lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States, those veterans or survivors receive their disability compensation or DIC at the rate of fifty cents per U.S. dollar, which is commonly referred to as payment at a "half-dollar rate." Payment of monetary burial benefits at more than the half-dollar rate requires, in addition to the legal residency requirement, that the veteran at the time of death be receiving disability compensation or be entitled to receive a disability pension but for the active-service requirement. Eligibility for burial in a national cemetery and for hospital and nursing home care and medical services is limited to Filipino veterans living here in the United States who are either U.S. citizens or lawful residents. Filipino veterans and their survivors are not eligible for any other VA benefit with the exception of education benefits available under chapter 35 of title 38 to certain children of these veterans.

We do not support the bill because it would disproportionately favor Filipino veterans over U.S. veterans. Mr. Chairman, in 2003 the average annual family income in the Philippines in U.S. dollars was approximately $2,864. In contrast, in 2006 the maximum annual pension rate for a veteran with no dependent was $10,929 U.S. dollars per year; the annual rate for a veteran with one dependent was $14,313; and the annual rate for a surviving spouse with no dependent was $7,329. Thus, Filipino veterans and their survivors receiving full-rate VA pensions while living in the Philippines would enjoy a much higher standard of living relative to the general population in the Philippines. At the same time, VA benefits paid to beneficiaries living in the United States, such as U.S. veterans, do not enable those beneficiaries to enjoy a standard of living higher than the general U.S. population. In fact, even when paid at the half-dollar rate, Filipino veterans and their survivors are receiving relatively higher rates of disability compensation, DIC, and burial benefits compared to beneficiaries receiving the full-dollar rate in the United States.

As a direct result of S. 57, VA would have to double the monthly payments currently provided to the more than 7,000 Filipino veterans and their survivors who now receive disability compensation or DIC at the half-dollar rate. In addition, we expect newly eligible veterans or their survivors to apply for pension benefits. Although precise numbers are not available, we have based our cost estimates on an estimate that more than 20,000 Filipino veterans reside outside the United States. We derived this figure by applying mortality rates for World War II veterans to an estimate of the Filipino veteran population that was calculated in 2000. The result-

ing 20,000 figure is in line with an estimate used by the Congressional Research Service in 2006. Since it is very difficult to develop a firm estimate for the size of this population, we believe that 20,000 figure is as reliable as we can establish at this date. Based on this figure, we estimate compensation, pension, and DIC costs in the first year will exceed $491 million. Enactment of S. 57 may also likely require VA to provide to Filipino veterans memorial benefits such as interment, perpetual care of gravesites, government-furnished headstones or markers, and Presidential Memorial Certificates.

S. 57 also would significantly affect VA's health care system. Currently, the VA Outpatient Clinic in Manila, Philippines, provides a wide range of ambulatory care services for U.S. veterans living in the Philippines as well as Compensation-and-Pension examinations for both U.S. and Filipino veterans. The Clinic has an annual operating budget of approximately $6.3 million and, in Fiscal Year 2006, served 3,799 U.S. veterans. Under S. 57, all Filipino veterans in the Philippines with VA-adjudicated service-connected disabilities would become eligible for VA health care in the Philippines. As of February 2007, the VA Manila Regional Office provided compensation for service-connected disabilities to 3,441 Philippine Service veterans, of which 2,726 resided in the Philippines. Based on the expected increase in the number of veterans eligible for care and an increase in the number of Compensation-and-Pension examination requests, we estimate an almost 100 percent increase in overall operating costs in the Philippines if the bill is enacted. We estimate a total additional expense of over $5 million in the first year. Moreover, this cost estimate does not fully account for the expected impact of S. 57. It is expected that the newly eligible Filipino veterans also would require a significant increase in the costs at the Manila Clinic for pharmacy, beneficiary travel, specialty exams, and fee basis costs.

The bill would also impact VA's construction costs in the Philippines. Public Law 106–113 requires the Department of State (State) to locate diplomatic and other U.S. Government offices to secure embassy grounds when it builds a new or replaces an existing embassy. State is replacing its embassy in Manila. In December 2006, Secretary Nicholson approved a recommendation to relocate the Manila VA Outpatient Clinic from its current leased site to U.S. Embassy property. State is planning to co-locate the Manila regional office and the Outpatient Clinic on embassy property at its Seafront compound. The facilities will be built and funded through a State major construction appropriation, and the new VA facilities are planned to be completed in 2010. VA will reimburse State for this project through Capital Security Cost-Sharing (CSCS) charges over a period of several years. VA's costs under that program are based on staffing levels. Any additional space and staffing required for this project due to the enactment of S. 57 will significantly increase VA's costs.

Additional health-care costs would have to be paid with existing health-care funds. Filipino veterans now residing outside the United States would be eligible for and could obtain health care in the United States by traveling to the United States to receive it. They would not, as now, have to reside in the United States and become U.S. citizens or permanent residents. We estimate that, if 10 percent of these newly eligible veterans (i.e., approximately 2,000 of the estimated 20,000 population of veterans) obtain health care in the United States, it will cost over $13 million in the first year.

We estimate additional benefit costs (including medical benefits and memorial benefits) of approximately $510 million in the first year and more than $4 billion over 10 years. Our cost estimate includes only expenses related to the three most significant monetary benefits, which are disability compensation, pension, and DIC, in our total estimate of benefit costs.

Administrative costs are estimated at $8.8 million in the first year and $27 million over 10 years. These estimates of administrative costs do not include the CSCS costs or administrative costs related to the provision of health care, and, as with the benefit costs, include administrative costs related to disability compensation, pension, and DIC, and not costs related to the administration of other monetary benefits.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to entertain any questions you or the other Members of the Committee may have.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Aument.

I want you to know that we are glad to have also accompanying you Dr. Wiebe and Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Aument, for U.S. veterans residing in other countries, is there an adjustment made to reflect the average income in the country where the veteran is living?

Mr. AUMENT. No, there is not, Mr. Chairman. I believe today we have around 46,000 veterans who reside abroa. Many reside in countries where the cost of living is less than the United States, and many reside in countries where the cost of living is greater than the United States. We have considered this in the past and did not really consider that to be analogous to the situation that we have with Filipino veterans because the Congress has recognized a specific distinction with respect to the Philippine veterans as it is embodied in law today. We had certainly taken that into account, but did not consider it to be an analogous situation.

Chairman AKAKA. Mr. Aument, would VA support establishing veterans' status for Filipino veterans in each group if there were provisions for an adjusted level of pension that takes into account where the veterans live?

Mr. AUMENT. Mr. Chairman, today we were asked to appear before you to testify on S. 57 and we really have no other alternative legislative proposals to offer. Certainly, that would address one of the most significant hurdles and barriers to this bill but, at this point, I am not prepared to state what the Administration could support.

Chairman AKAKA. Mr. Aument, will you please explain the process that VA uses to evaluate claims for compensation made by Filipino veterans living in the Philippines?

Mr. AUMENT. Certainly, Mr. Chairman. It does not look that different than the process involved in evaluating any veteran's claim for disability compensation today. One difference, though, is that, for new claimants, those claiming disability compensation for the first time, we have to establish that the veteran filing the application was not a collaborator with the Japanese occupying forces at that time. There is a list called the Collaborators' List that is maintained by the Yokohama Bank in Japan that we must initially inquire against to confirm that the applicant was not a collaborator during World War II.

After that, the process follows the pathway that any disability compensation claim would follow, requiring proof of honorable service and that the medical conditions indeed are present that the veteran is claiming as disabilities.

Chairman AKAKA. There is concern about the possible impact on workload at the Manila Regional Office should Congress extend full veterans' benefits to all eligible Filipino veterans of World War II. What would be the impact on the workload at the Manila Regional Office?

Mr. AUMENT. It would certainly be impacted. There would be a rather dramatic increase in claims filed. We could as much as double the workload there. On the one hand, though, the disability pension claims for these veterans would likely not be that difficult to process inasmuch as these veterans are already over age 65, so that would be a threshold that would be relatively easy to manage. But certainly there would be impact and we would have to be prepared to adjust staffing accordingly or assist them in some other fashion.

Chairman AKAKA. Mr. Aument, please describe the process for medical examinations in connection with claims for compensation in the Philippines. Have any problems arisen using local doctors for these examinations?

Mr. AUMENT. First of all, most of the disability compensation and pension exams conducted today are conducted by the clinic in Manila that is under Dr. Wiebe's jurisdiction. What we do have occasional problems with, and quite frankly, it is not that rampant, are what they call claims fixers, would be individuals who have helped the veterans on occasion obtain falsified, fraudulent medical evidence. That is not a rampant problem, though, and I think in some cases it is overstated.

Chairman AKAKA. Senator Craig?

Senator CRAIG. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ron, let me kind of take off from where the Chairman has gone with a couple of questions. If the Committee were to structure a pension benefit for veterans residing in the Philippines that had the same purchasing power that a pension recipient in the United States had, what would be the equivalent maximum monthly benefit? Have you done any calculations based on S. 57?

Mr. AUMENT. Yes, we have, Senator Craig. It has not been a simple calculation because some of the economic statistics that we would be turning to are not as readily available to us. Having said that, if we take a look at what today's pension rate for an American veteran is with one dependent, we mentioned it was around $14,000 annually, and contrast that to the average household income for the most recent census statistics we had of around $46,000 annually, it is around 30 percent of the average household income. If we were to compare that to the average household income in the Philippines of around $2,800, you are speaking around $820 annually.

Senator CRAIG. OK. An $820 annualized pension, then?

Mr. AUMENT. That is correct.

Senator CRAIG. I see.

Mr. AUMENT. That is strictly doing the math on that, Senator Craig.

Senator CRAIG. Yes. How would the VA verify income in the Philippines if the Committee created a new means-tested benefit?

Mr. AUMENT. We would employ at least some of the same procedures that we do today for veterans in the United States. We would require them annually to submit what we call the EVRs, the Eligibility Verification Review information, where they would be reporting any income that they had received during the preceding one-year period. I would presume that we would probably also take into account unusual medical expenses that they may incur.

We would have to explore whether there were comparable opportunities with the Philippine Government to use some of the other mechanisms that we have available. For example, we do annual matching against Social Security and IRS information to help verify pension recipients' income in the United States. I don't know what would be available, if anything, for similar support purposes in the Philippines.

We would have to look into that.

Senator CRAIG. But these are calculations that you currently make given the circumstance of the eligible veteran anywhere, is that correct?

Mr. AUMENT. That is correct, sir.

Senator CRAIG. How would S. 57 affect eligibility for access to VA's Manila Outpatient Clinic? Would timely medical care for U.S. veterans at the outpatient clinic be affected if all 13,000 Filipino veterans in the Philippines were given access to that care?

Mr. AUMENT. I would have to defer to my colleague, Dr. Wiebe.

Senator CRAIG. Dr. Wiebe?

Dr. Wiebe. Thank you, Senator Craig. If I could just pause for a moment and express my profound respect for the bravery and service of the Philippine soldiers and for their partnership with the U.S. military in the defense of freedom. I had the pleasure of traveling to the Philippines last month to conduct a site visit of our VA clinic in Manila and it reinforced and increased my admiration for the Philippines and its people.

We estimate that if this legislation were to be enacted, approximately 2,700 Filipino veterans would now have access to the VA clinic in Manila, and that is based on the number of those that are currently service-connected and receiving VA support. Currently, the clinic sees approximately 3,700 patients a year. The clinic is relatively small. It is about 20,000 square feet and has a limited number of examination rooms. With the current workload, the VA clinic staff estimate they are at approximately 70 to 80 percent of capacity based on the size of the building.

So if there were a relatively quick infusion of another 2,700 patients to the clinic, we would have a difficult time absorbing that workload immediately and maintaining both the current access and current quality of care. We could look at options of increasing staff, extending hours into the evening, or going to weekends, but that would pose some other additional logistical and operational issues, including security.

In a few years, as you may know, the VA is planning to replace its clinic and move to a much larger structure. At that time, some of the physical capacity constraints would be eliminated and then there would be some resource implications, and I could discuss those if you would like.

Senator CRAIG. Thank you very much, Doctor, Ron.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

Chairman AKAKA. I want to welcome Senator Murray to the Committee this morning and I want to call on her for any statement and questions she may have.

STATEMENT OF HON. PATTY MURRAY, U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON

Senator MURRAY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to come by today and especially thank you for holding this really important hearing on Filipino veterans. It has been just too long that America has not shown its full appreciation for these really honorable men and women who stood in harm's way with our American soldiers and fought our common enemy during a war many, many decades ago. As you so well have put it, they have been denied full benefits and care that American counterparts re-

ceive and I really hope that today's hearing will mark a turning point in our Nation's treatment of these heroes.

I want to thank all of the Filipino veterans who are here testifying today. You are speaking out for so many people who can't be here and we truly appreciate it.

Mr. Chairman, I especially want to thank a constituent of mine who is here, Benito Valdez. If you could just stand, Benito. He is here with his daughter. You will hear his testimony in just a few minutes. He has an amazing, compelling story and has been forgotten by America for too long. I hope that, we, in this Committee, can right that wrong and move forward this year to make sure that Mr. Valdez, as well as many other aging soldiers, get the benefits they deserve before it is too late.

I am a cosponsor of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act and the Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act. I believe that those bills will help reverse the inequity that we have seen for too long.

Mr. Chairman, I have a defense appropriations hearing at the same time as we are having this, but I wanted to come by today to let you know that I want to work with you, Mr. Chairman, and whoever else to make sure that we right this wrong that for too long has been forgotten and ignored in this country, and I want to thank all of the Filipino veterans who were there by our side more than 50 years ago and who deserve now for us finally to be at your side.

Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much. Senator Murray, from the State of Washington, has been a stalwart Member of this Committee and has taken leadership here and also in appropriations for veterans. She is very important to us.

Again, I want to thank you, Mr. Aument, for your testimony. As I said before, your full statement will be placed in the record. We look forward to continuing to work with you, and again, thank you for being here. I personally want to say aloha to Dr. Wiebe because we work together. We had a series of hearings in Hawaii that he attended and we really appreciated that, Dr. Wiebe. Thank you very much.

Mr. AUMENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman AKAKA. Now I would like to call on panel three. I want to welcome our third panel of witnesses.

Mr. Sidath Panangala, representing the Congressional Research Service, is accompanied by Ms. Christine Scott, also of CRS. They have been asked to present a historical perspective on benefits for Filipino veterans. Also on the third panel are Ms. Maria Luisa Antonio, Executive Director of the Veterans Equity Center, and Ms. Jenah Yangwas from Student Action for Veterans Equity, the granddaughter of a Filipino World War II veteran.

I want to thank all of you for being here today. Your full statement will be in the record and appear there in the record of this hearing. Thank you very much. You may begin.

STATEMENT OF SIDATH VIRANGA PANANGALA, ANALYST IN SOCIAL LEGISLATION, CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE; ACCOMPANIED BY CHRISTINE SCOTT, SPECIALIST IN TAX ECONOMICS, CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE

Mr. PANANGALA. Thank you, Chairman Akaka. Before I begin, I want to introduce Christine Scott, who is here with me today. She and I both work together on veterans' benefits issues and we will be happy to answer any questions you may have at the end of this hearing. Having said that, let me begin my statement.

Chairman Akaka and Members of the Committee, my name is Sidath Panangala. I am from the Congressional Research Service and am accompanied by Christine Scott, also from CRS. We are honored to appear before the Committee today.

As requested by the Committee, my testimony will first provide a brief overview of the two Rescission Acts of 1946, followed by information from the record that sheds light on the intent of Congress in passing these Acts, and finally, other relevant information from that period to help place this legislation—the passage of this 1946 legislation—in context. In addition to my oral testimony, I would like to include the "Overview of Filipino Veterans' Benefits," this report, for the record, as well.

Just to make it clear, CRS takes no position on the Rescission Acts or on the current legislative proposals to eliminate the distinction between various categories of World War II Philippine veterans.

It appears that the 79th Congress, in passing the Rescission Acts, sought to strike a balance by providing certain benefits to veterans of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, recognized guerilla forces which later became a recognized part of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, and the New Philippine Scouts, but not the full benefits available to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. Those full benefits included education, unemployment compensation, medical care, domiciliary care, and other benefits provided by the laws administered by the then Veterans' Administration.

Until the passage of these special provisions in the First Rescission Act, VA officials believed that these Filipino veterans met the definition of active service in the U.S. Armed Forces and were, therefore, eligible for full VA benefits. For example, on May 5, 1942, VA Director Frank T. Hines approved an opinion of the Solicitor of the VA holding that members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army were in active service of the land or naval forces of the United States within the meaning of the National Service Life Insurance Act of 1940.

As the Committee is aware, the United States has had a long relationship with the Philippine Islands since they were acquired by the United States in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War. Filipinos have served in and with the U.S. Armed Forces during a number of conflicts, including World War II.

In 1946, Congress passed the First Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act and the Second Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act, which became collectively and commonly known as the Rescission Acts of 1946.

The First Supplemental Act, enacted on February 18, 1946, authorized a $200 million appropriation to the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines with a provision limiting benefits for these veterans to, one, the compensation for service-connected disability or death, and the National Service Life Insurance contracts already in force at the time. Furthermore, the Act included a provision currently codified at Title 38 of the United States Code that limited service in the organized forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines that were not deemed to be active service in the military or naval or air service.

This Act further provided that any benefit paid to the Commonwealth Army veterans would be paid at the rate of one Philippine peso to each dollar for a veteran who was a member of the U.S. Armed Forces. This was based on the assumption that one peso would obtain for Philippine veterans in the Philippine economy the equivalent of one dollar of goods and services for U.S. veterans in the American economy. Because of the differences between economic conditions and living standards in the United States and the Philippines, benefits were later limited to 50 cents on the dollar.

The Second Rescission Act, enacted on May 27, 1946, provided that service in the Philippine Scouts, under Section 14 of the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945, often referred to as the New Philippine Scouts, shall not have been deemed active service for the laws administered by the VA.

CRS has examined the Congressional Record and certain hearing records from this period. There is little background information on the intent of Congress in passing the First Rescission Act, as it affects veterans of the Commonwealth Army. However, statements made by Senator Carl Hayden during the hearings on the Second Rescission Act, which affected the New Philippine Scouts, provide some indication on the legislative intent in passing both these Acts, and furthermore, the events at the time may be of interest to the Committee in understanding the context in which these laws were passed.

Examining the hearing record leading up to the passage of the Rescission Act, it seems clear from Senator Hayden's statement that the passage of the first Rescission Act was meant to balance the competing financial interests by providing some benefits, such as pensions for service-connected disability or death, while at the same time limiting it to members of the Commonwealth Army that was not considered part of the active service.

The Second Rescission Act clearly states that wartime benefits do not apply to the New Philippine Scouts, and to quote from these hearings, "Because hostilities have actually ceased, the amendment makes it perfectly clear that these wartime benefits do not apply and the 50,000 men now authorized to be enlisted in the New Philippine Scouts will be only entitled to pensions resulting from service- connected disability or death."

In addition, the passage of the Rescission Acts may have been influenced by other bills under consideration of Congress at the time. In 1946, Congress passed the Philippine Rehabilitation Act and the Philippine Trade Act. The terms of the Rehabilitation Act required the United States to pay claims for rehabilitation of the Philippines and war damage claims up to $620 million. The Philippine Trade

Act provided for free trade between the United States and the Philippines until July 1954. These bills under consideration at that time would have provided economic stability to the newly emerging nation.

According to Senator Hayden from the hearing record, I would like to quote. "As I see it, the best thing the American Government can do is to help the Filipino people help themselves. Where there was a choice between expenditures for the rehabilitation of the economy of the Philippine Islands and payments in cash to Filipino veterans, I am sure it is better to spend an equal amount of money, for example, on improving the roads and port facilities. What the Filipino veteran needs is steady employment rather than to depend for his living upon a monthly payment sent from the United States."

Therefore, it seems clear that Congress considered the Rescission Acts in the context of providing for the comprehensive economic development of the soon-to-be-sovereign Republic of the Philippines.

In closing, the Rescission Acts of 1946 limited veterans' benefits to certain Filipino veterans while providing some benefits, such as pensions for service-connected disability or death. At the same time, Congress passed other legislation to provide for the economic well-being of the newly emerging nation.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. We will be happy to take any questions you may have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Panangala follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SIDATH VIRANGA PANANGALA,
ANALYST, SOCIAL LEGISLATION, CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Senator Craig, and Members of the Committee, my name is Sidath Panangala from the Congressional Research Service (CRS). I am accompanied by Christine Scott, also from CRS. We are honored to appear before the Committee today. As requested by the Committee, my testimony will first provide a brief overview of the two Rescission Acts of 1946, followed by information from the record that sheds light on the intent of Congress in passing these Acts, and, finally, other relevant information from that period, to help place the passage of this 1946 legislation in context. In addition to my oral testimony, I have included the CRS Report RL33876, Overview of Filipino Veterans' Benefits, for the record. CRS takes no position on the Rescission Acts or on current legislative proposals to eliminate the distinction between various categories of World War II Filipino veterans.

It appears that the 79th Congress, in passing the Rescission Acts, sought to strike a balance, by providing certain benefits to veterans of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, Recognized Guerrilla Forces (that later became a recognized part of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines), and the New Philippine Scouts, but not the full benefits available to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. Those full benefits included education, unemployment compensation, medical care, domiciliary care, and other benefits provided by the laws administered by the then Veterans' Administration (VA). Until the passage of these special provisions in the first and second Rescission Acts, VA officials believed that these Filipino veterans met the definition of active service in the U.S. Armed Forces and were therefore eligible for full VA benefits. For example, on May 5, 1942, the VA Director Frank T. Hines, approved an opinion of the Solicitor of the VA holding that members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army were in "active service" of the land or naval forces of the United States within the meaning of the National Service Life Insurance Act of 1940 (P.L. 76–801).

RESCISSION ACTS OF 1946

As the Committee is aware, the United States has had a long relationship with the Philippines Islands since they were acquired by the United States in 1898 as

a result of the Spanish-American War. Filipinos have served in, and with, the U.S. Armed Forces during a number of conflicts, including World War II. In 1946, Congress passed the first Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act (P.L 79–301) and the second Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act (P.L. 79–391), which came to be collectively and commonly known as the "Rescission Acts of 1946."

The first Supplemental Rescission Act, enacted on February 18, 1946, authorized a $200 million appropriation to the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines with a provision limiting benefits for these veterans to (1) compensation for service-connected disabilities or death, and (2) National Service Life Insurance contracts already in force. Furthermore, the Act included a provision currently codified at 38 U.S.C. §107(a) stating that (and I quote):

> Service before July 1, 1946, in the organized military forces of the government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, while such forces were in the service of the Armed Forces of the United States pursuant to the military order of the President, dated July 26, 1941 . . . shall not be deemed to have been active military, naval, or air service for the purposes of any law of the United States conferring rights, privileges, or benefits upon any person by reason of the service of such person or the service of any other person in the Armed Forces . . .

This Act further provided that any benefits paid to Commonwealth Army veterans would be paid at the rate of 1 Philippine peso to each dollar for a veteran who was a member of the U.S. Armed Forces. This was based on the assumption that one peso would obtain for Philippine veterans in the Philippine economy the equivalent of $1 of goods and services for U.S. veterans in the American economy. Because of differences between economic conditions and living standards in the United States and the Philippines, benefits were later limited to 50 cents on the dollar.

The second Rescission Act, enacted on May 27, 1946, provided that service in the Philippine Scouts under Section 14 of the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945 (P.L. 79–190) (often referred to as New Philippine Scouts) shall not be deemed to have been active military or air service for the purpose of any laws administered by the VA.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT AND CONTEXT

CRS has examined the Congressional Record and certain hearing records from this period (1946). There is little background information on the intent of Congress in passing the first Rescission Act, as it affects veterans of the Commonwealth Army. However, statements made by Senator Carl Hayden during hearings on the second Rescission Act, which affected New Philippine Scouts, provides some indication of the legislative intent in passing both Rescission Acts. Furthermore, other events at the time may be of interest to the Committee, in understanding the context in which the Rescission Acts were considered.

Examining the hearing record leading up to the passage of the second Rescission Act, it seems clear from Senator Hayden's statements that the passage of the first Rescission Act was meant to balance competing financial interests by providing some benefits, such as pensions for service-connected disability or death, and also an appropriation of $200 million for the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines. However, to reduce the U.S. liability for future benefits, language was included stating that service by members of the Commonwealth Army was not considered active military, naval or air service in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The hearings (on the second Rescission Act) also clearly indicate that most wartime benefits do not apply to New Philippine Scouts. To quote from these hearings:

> . . . Because hostilities have actually ceased, the amendment makes it perfectly clear that these wartime benefits do not apply and the 50,000 men now authorized to be enlisted in the [New] Philippine Scouts will be entitled only to pensions resulting from service-connected disability or service-connected death.

In addition, the passage of the Rescission Acts may have been influenced by other bills under consideration by Congress at that time. In 1946, Congress passed the Philippine Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 79–370) and the Philippine Trade Act (P.L. 79–371). The terms of the Rehabilitation Act required the United States to pay claims for rehabilitation of the Philippines and war damage claims up to $620 million. Of this sum, $220 million was allocated for repair of public property. The remaining $400 million was allocated for war damage claims of individuals and associations. The Philippine Trade Act provided for free trade between the United States and the Philippines until July 3, 1954. These bills under consideration at the time would

have provided economic stability to the newly emerging nation. According to Senator Hayden in the hearing record, (and I quote):

> As I see it, the best thing the American government can do is to help the Filipino people to help themselves. Where there was a choice between expenditures for the rehabilitation of the economy of the Philippine Islands and payments in cash to Filipino veterans, I am sure it is better to spend any equal sum of money, for example, on improving the roads and port facilities. What the Filipino veteran needs is steady employment rather than to depend for his living upon a monthly payment sent from the United States.

Therefore, it seems clear that Congress considered the Rescission Acts in the context of providing for the comprehensive economic development of the soon to be sovereign Republic of the Philippines.

In closing, the Rescission Acts of 1946 limited veterans' benefits to certain Filipino veterans, while providing some benefits such as pensions for a service-connected disability or death to veterans of the Commonwealth Army and New Philippine Scouts. At the same time Congress passed other legislation to provide for the economic well being of the newly emerging nation.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The CRS Report for Congress on the Overview of Filipino Veterans' Benefits follows:]

Order Code RL33876

CRS Report for Congress

Overview of Filipino Veterans' Benefits

Updated April 6, 2007

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Prepared for Memb rs and
Committees of Congress

Congressional
Research
Service

Overview of Filipino Veterans' Benefits

Summary

The United States has had a continuous relationship with the Philippine Islands since 1898, when they were acquired by the United States as a result of the Spanish-American War. Filipinos have served in, and with, the U.S. Armed Forces since the Spanish-American War, and especially during World War II. The Islands remained a possession of the United States until 1946.

Since 1946, Congress has passed several laws affecting various categories of Filipino veterans. Many of these laws have been liberalizing laws that have provided Filipino World War II veterans with medical and monetary benefits similar to benefits available to U.S. veterans.

However, not all veterans' benefits are available to veterans of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, Recognized Guerrilla Forces, and New Philippine Scouts. In the 110th Congress, two measures, H.R. 760 and S. 57, have been introduced that would eliminate the distinction between the Regular, or "Old," Philippine Scouts and the other three groups of veterans — the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, Recognized Guerrilla Forces, and New Philippine Scouts — making them all fully eligible for veterans' benefits similar to those received by U.S. veterans.

This report defines the four specific groups (Regular Philippine Scouts, Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, Recognized Guerilla Forces, and New Philippine Scouts) of Filipino nationals who served under the command of the United States, outlines the Rescission Acts of 1946, benefit changes since 1946, current benefits for Filipino veterans by group, and recent legislative proposals. It will be updated as legislative events warrant.

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Overview of Filipino Veterans' Benefits

Background

The Philippine Islands became a U.S. possession in 1898, when they were ceded from Spain following the Spanish-American War (1898-1902).[1] In 1934, Congress passed the Philippine Independence Act (Tydings-McDuffie Act, P.L. 73-127), which set a 10-year timetable for the eventual independence of the Philippines and in the interim established a Commonwealth of the Philippines vested with certain powers over its internal affairs. In 1935, the Philippine Constitution was adopted and the first President of the Philippines was elected. The granting of full independence was ultimately delayed until 1946 because of the Japanese occupation of the Islands from 1942-1945.

Among other things, P.L. 73-127 reserved to the United States the power to maintain military bases and armed forces in the Philippines and, upon order of the President of the United States, the right to call into the service of the U.S. Armed Forces all military forces organized by the Philippine government. On July 26, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order inducting all military forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines under the command of a newly created command structure called the United States Armed Forces of the Far East (USAFFE). These units remained under USAFFE command through the duration of World War II (WWII), until authority over them was returned to the Commonwealth at the time of independence.

From time to time since 1946, Congress has passed laws providing, and in some instances repealing, benefits to Filipino veterans. This report, which will be updated as legislative events warrant, provides an overview of major Filipino veterans legislation enacted by Congress since 1946. The report begins by defining the specific groups of Filipino nationals who served under the command of the United States, outlines the Rescission Acts of 1946, the changes to benefits for Filipino veterans since 1946, and recent legislative proposals. **Table 1**, at the end of this report, shows the current benefits for Filipino veterans and survivors.

Regular, or "Old," Philippine Scouts. These were soldiers who enlisted as Philippine Scouts prior to October 6, 1945. They were members of a small, regular component of the U.S. Army that was considered to be in regular active service. The Regular Philippine Scouts were part of the U.S. Army throughout their

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[1] 38 U.S.C. §101(6).

existence, and are entitled to all benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) by the same criteria that apply to any veteran of U.S. military service.[2]

Commonwealth Army of the Philippines. These soldiers enlisted in the organized military forces of the Government of the Philippines under the provisions of the Philippine Independence Act of 1934. They served before July 1, 1946, while such forces were in the service of the U.S. Armed Forces pursuant to the military order of the President of the United States dated July 26, 1941.

Recognized Guerrilla Forces. These were individuals who served in resistance units recognized by, and cooperating with, the U.S. Armed Forces during the period April 20, 1942, to June 20, 1946.[3] They served primarily during the Japanese occupation of the Islands. Following reoccupation of the Islands by the U.S. Armed Forces, they became a recognized part of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines by order of the President of the Philippines.

New Philippine Scouts. These were Philippine citizens who served with the U.S. Armed Forces with the consent of the Philippine government between October 6, 1945, and June 30, 1947, and who were discharged from such service under conditions other than dishonorable.[4] Since these scouts were recruited as a result of the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945 (P.L. 79-190), they are referred to as "New" Scouts.

Rescission Acts of 1946

In 1946, Congress passed the first Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act (P.L. 79-301) and the second Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act (P.L. 79-391), which came to be commonly known as the "Rescission Acts of 1946." *It should be noted that the Rescission Acts of 1946 applied only to Filipino veterans who were members of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, Recognized Guerrilla Forces, or the New Philippine Scouts. Veterans who served as Regular, or "Old," Philippine Scouts were categorized as U.S. veterans. They were, and remain, generally entitled to all veterans' benefits for which any other U.S. veteran is eligible.*

First Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act (P.L. 79-301). Enacted on February 18, 1946, P.L. 79-301 authorized a $200 million appropriation to the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines with a provision limiting benefits for these veterans to: (1) compensation for service-connected

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[2] 38 C.F.R. §3.40(a).

[3] 38 C.F.R. §3.40(d).

[4] 38 C.F.R. §3.40(b).

disabilities[5] or death; and (2) National Service Life Insurance contracts already in force.[6] Furthermore, this provision included bill language stating that:

> Service before July 1, 1946, in the organized military forces of the government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines while such forces were in the service of the Armed Forces of the United States pursuant to the military order of the President, dated July 26, 1941 ... shall not be deemed to have been active military, naval or air service for the purposes of any law of the United States conferring rights, privileges, or benefits upon any person by reason of the service of such person or the service of any other person in the Armed Forces.[7]

Because of differences between economic conditions and living standards in the United States and the Philippines, P.L. 79-301 also provided that any benefits paid to Commonwealth Army veterans would be paid at the rate of one Philippine peso to each dollar[8] for a veteran who was a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, with the assumption that one peso would obtain for Philippine veterans in the Philippine economy the equivalent of $1 of goods and services for American veterans in the American economy. Prior to the enactment of P.L. 79-301, Commonwealth Army veterans were determined by the then Veterans' Administration to be eligible for U.S. veterans' benefits.[9]

Second Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act (P.L. 79-391). Enacted on May 27, 1946, P.L. 79-391 provided that service in the Philippine Scouts (the New Philippine Scouts) under Section 14 of the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945 (P.L. 79-190) shall not be deemed to have been active military or air service for the purpose of any laws administered by the Veterans' Administration.

Legislative Intent of the Rescission Acts. There is little background information on the intent of Congress in passing the first Rescission Act, as it affects veterans of the Commonwealth Army. However, statements made by Senator Carl

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[5] The term "service-connected" means, with respect to disability, that such disability was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service. The VA determines whether veterans have service-connected disabilities, and for those with such disabilities, assigns ratings from 0 to 100% based on the severity of the disability. Percentages are assigned in increments of 10%.

[6] P.L. 79-301; 60 Stat. 14.

[7] Ibid; now codified at 38 U.S.C. §107.

[8] For example, if a veteran who was a member of the U.S. Armed Forces received $50 for a benefit, a veteran who was a member of the Commonwealth Army would receive 50 pesos for the same benefit.

[9] In 1942, the Solicitor of the VA ruled that members of the Commonwealth Army called into the service of the United States by the President's order of July 26, 1941, were eligible for benefits under the Veterans' National Life Insurance Act. In 1945, General Omar Bradley, then Director of the Veterans' Administration, expressed an opinion to the Senate Appropriations Committee that the term "veterans" included these Commonwealth Army veterans. *Filipino American Veterans and Dependents Association v. United States of America*, 391 F. Supp. 1314 (N.D. Cal. 1974).

Hayden during hearings on the second Rescission Act, which affected New Philippine Scouts, provide some indication of legislative intent in the passage of the first Rescission Act, and to the subsequent passage of the second Rescission Act. Furthermore, other events at the time may provide some context in which the Rescission Acts were considered.

At the end of World War II, when Congress was considering a $200 million appropriation for the support of the Philippine Army, Senator Carl Hayden of the Senate Committee on Appropriations sent a letter to General Omar Bradley, then Director of the Veterans' Administration, requesting information concerning the status of the Filipino servicemen and the potential cost of their veterans benefits. In his response to the committee, General Bradley indicated that the total cost of paying veterans' benefits to members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and their dependents, under then existing veterans' laws, would amount in the long run (75 years) to about $3 billion. It seems clear from Senator Hayden's statements that the passage of the first Rescission Act was meant to balance competing financial interests by providing some benefits, such as pensions for service-connected disability or death, while at the same time reducing the U.S. liability for future benefits. To accomplish this, Senator Hayden, Senator Russell and Senator Brooks included language by way of an amendment to the first Rescission bill stating that service by members of the Commonwealth Army was not considered active military, naval, or air service in the U.S. Armed Forces. Furthermore, hearings on the second Rescission Act also clearly indicate that it was Congress's intent to limit wartime benefits given to New Philippine Scouts:

> Because neither the President nor the Congress has declared an end to the war, a [New] Philippine Scout upon separation from service would be entitled to the same benefits as an American soldier who served in time of war. Unless this amendment [to the second Rescission Act] is adopted, a [New Philippine] Scout would be entitled to claim every advantage provided for the G.I. bill of rights such as loans, education, unemployment compensation, hospitalization, domiciliary care and other benefits provided by the laws administered by the Veterans' Administration. Because hostilities have actually ceased, the amendment makes it perfectly clear that these wartime benefits do not apply and that the 50,000 men now authorized to be enlisted in the [New] Philippine Scouts will be entitled only to pensions resulting from service-connected disability or service-connected death.[10]

In addition, the passage of the Rescission Acts may have been influenced by other bills under consideration by Congress at that time. In 1946, Congress passed the Philippine Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 79-370) and the Philippine Trade Act (P.L. 79-371). The terms of the Rehabilitation Act required the United States to pay claims for rehabilitation of the Philippines and war damage claims up to $620 million. Of this sum, $220 million was allocated for repair of public property. The remaining $400 million was allocated for war damage claims of individuals and associations. The Philippine Trade Act provided for free trade between the United States and the Philippines until July 3, 1954. These bills under consideration at the

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[10] U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Deficiency, Hearings on H.R. 5604, 79th Cong., 2nd sess., Mar. 25, 1946, p. 29.

time would have provided economic stability to the newly emerging nation. According to Senator Hayden:

> As I see it, the best thing the American government can do is to help the Filipino people to help themselves. Where there was a choice between expenditures for the rehabilitation of the economy of the Philippine Islands and payments in cash to Filipino veterans, I am sure it is better to spend any equal sum of money, for example, on improving the roads and port facilities. What the Filipino veteran needs is steady employment rather than to depend for his living upon a monthly payment sent from the United States.[11]

Therefore, it seems clear that Congress considered the Rescission Acts in the context of providing for the comprehensive economic development of the soon to be sovereign Republic of the Philippines.

Benefit Changes, 1946-1998

Health Care Benefits

P.L. 80-865. Enacted on July 1, 1948, P.L. 80-865 authorized aid not to exceed $22.5 million for the construction and equipping of a hospital in the Philippines to provide care for Commonwealth Army veterans and Recognized Guerrilla Forces. P.L. 80-865 also authorized $3.3 million annually for a five-year grant program to reimburse the Republic of the Philippines for the care and treatment of service-connected conditions of those veterans. In 1951, plans for a new hospital were completed, and construction of a new hospital began in 1953. Work was completed at a total cost of $9.4 million, and the hospital was dedicated on November 20, 1955.[12] This facility came to be known as the Veterans Memorial Medical Center (VMMC), and the facility was turned over to the Philippine government. The hospital is now organized under the Philippine Department of National Defense.[13]

P.L. 82-311. Enacted on April 9, 1952, P.L. 82-311 authorized the President to transfer the United States Army Provisional Philippine Scout Hospital at Fort McKinley, Philippines, including all the equipment contained in the hospital, to the Republic of the Philippines. P.L. 82-311 also authorized a five-year grant program to reimburse the Republic of the Philippines for the medical care of Regular Philippine Scouts undergoing treatment at the United States Army Provisional Philippine Scout Hospital.

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[11] U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Deficiency, Hearings on H.R. 5604, 79th Cong., 2nd sess., Mar. 25, 1946, p. 61.

[12] U.S. Congress, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, *Medical Care of Veterans,* Committee print, 90th Cong., 1st sess., Apr. 17, 1967. House Committee print no. 4, p. 384.

[13] See [http://server.pvao.mil.ph/vmmc.html]; accessed Jan. 19, 2007.

P.L. 83-421. Enacted on June 18, 1954, P.L. 83-421 extended the five-year grant program for an additional five years, through June 30, 1958, and authorized payments of $3 million for the first year, and then payments decreasing by $500,000 each year. No change was made to the provision stating that funds could be used for either medical care on a contract basis or for hospital operations.

P.L. 85-461. The VMMC was originally intended to provide care for service-connected conditions only. However, P.L. 85-461 enacted on June 18, 1958, expanded its use to include veterans of any war for any nonservice-connected disability if such veterans were unable to defray the expenses of necessary hospital care. The VA was authorized to pay for such care on a contract basis. P.L. 85-461 also authorized the President, with the concurrence of the Republic of the Philippines, to modify the agreement between the United States and the Philippines with respect to hospital and medical care for Commonwealth Army veterans, and Recognized Guerrilla Forces.[14] The law stated that in lieu of any grants made after July 1, 1958, the VA may enter into a contract with the VMMC under which the United States would pay for hospital care in the Republic of the Philippines for Commonwealth Army veterans and Recognized Guerrilla Forces determined by the VA to need such hospital care for service-connected disabilities. P.L. 85-461 also required that the contract must be entered into before July 1, 1958, would be for a period of not more than five consecutive fiscal years beginning July 1, 1958, and shall provide for payments for such hospital care at a per diem rate to be jointly determined for each fiscal year by the two governments to be fair and reasonable.

P.L. 85-461 also authorized the Republic of the Philippines to use at their discretion beds, equipment, and other facilities of the VMMC at Manila, not required for hospital care of Commonwealth Army veterans with service-connected disabilities, for the care of other persons.[15]

P.L. 88-40. Enacted on June 13, 1963, P.L. 88-40 extended the grant program for another five years, through June 30, 1968. Under provisions of P.L. 88-40, costs for any one fiscal year were not to exceed $500,000.

P.L. 89-612. Enacted on September 30, 1966, P.L. 89-612 expanded the grant program to include hospital care at the VMMC for Commonwealth Army veterans, determined by the VA to need such care for nonservice-connected disabilities if they were unable to defray the expenses of such care. P.L. 89-612 also authorized the provision of hospital care to New Philippine Scouts for service-connected

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[14] This law defined "Commonwealth Army Veterans" as "persons who served before July 1, 1946, in the organized military forces of the Government of the Philippines, while such forces were in the service of the Armed Forces pursuant to the military order of the President dated July 26, 1941, including among such military forces organized guerrilla forces under commanders appointed, designated, or subsequently recognized by the Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, or another competent authority in the Army of the United States, and who were discharged or released from such service under conditions other than dishonorable."

[15] This language contained in P.L. 85-461 was restated in P.L. 85-857, which consolidated the laws of the Veterans' Administration.

disabilities, and for nonservice-connected conditions if they were enlisted before July 4, 1946, the date of Philippine independence. P.L. 89-612 also authorized $500,000 for replacing and upgrading equipment and for restoring the physical plant of the hospital. P.L. 89-612 also provided an annual appropriation of $100,000 for six years, beginning in 1967, for grants to the VMMC for medical research and training of health service personnel.

Veterans Health Care Expansion Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-82). Enacted on August 1, 1973, P.L. 93-82 authorized nursing home care for eligible Commonwealth Army veterans and New Philippine Scouts. P.L. 93-82 also provided that available beds, equipment, and other facilities at the VMMC could be made available, at the discretion of the Republic of the Philippines, for other persons, subject to: (1) priority of admissions and hospitalizations given to Commonwealth Army veterans or New Philippine scouts needing hospital care for service-connected conditions; and (2) the use of available facilities on a contract basis for hospital care or medical services for persons eligible to receive care from the VA. P.L. 93-82 also authorized funding of up to $2 million annually for medical care, and provided for annual grants of up to $50,000 for education and training of health service personnel at the VMMC, and of up to $50,000 for replacing and upgrading equipment and maintaining the physical plant.

Veterans' Health Care, Training, and Small Business Loan Act of 1981 (P.L. 97-72). Enacted on November 3, 1981, P.L. 97-72 made substantial changes to then existing law. P.L. 97-72 amended section 632 [now 1732] of Title 38 "to make it explicitly clear that it is the position of the United States that the primary responsibility for providing medical care and treatment for Commonwealth Army veterans and New Philippine Scouts rests with the Republic of the Philippines."[16] The committee report accompanying P.L. 97-72 stated the long-standing position of Congress with regard to health care for Filipino veterans:

> There is little doubt that in 1948 when Congress enacted P.L. 80-865, authorizing a 5-year grant program to provide medical benefits to Filipino veterans with service-connected illnesses, including the authorization for constructing and equipping a hospital in Luzon, it intended that this program be temporary and that the Philippine government would eventually assume responsibility for funding the program and operations of the hospital.... These grants were renewed for an additional 5 years in 1954, but on a decreasing annual scale of payments (P.L. 83-421). The Committee report on this bill stated that progressively reducing these grants over five years was to make clear the intent of Congress that the Philippine government would be expected to gradually assume full responsibility for the hospital.... However, because of the moral obligation of the United States to provide care for Filipino veterans and the concern that the Philippine government would not be able to maintain a high standard of medical care to these veterans if assistance by the United States were withheld, this program was extended in 5-year increments through [FY] 1978. P.L. 89-612, enacted in September 1966, expanded the program to include medical care for nonservice-connected disabilities if the veteran were unable to

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[16] U.S. Congress, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, *Veterans' Health Care, Training, and Small Business Loan Act of 1981*. Report to accompany H.R. 3499. 97th Cong., 1st sess., H.Rept. 97-79.

defray the expense of medical care and included New Philippine Scouts in the coverage.[17]

Furthermore, P.L. 97-72 gave the VA the authority to contract for the care and treatment of U.S. veterans in the VMMC, and to provide grant authority of $500,000 per year for a period of five years for making grants to the VMMC to assist in the replacement and upgrading of equipment and the rehabilitation of the physical plant and facilities of the center.

The grant program was further authorized by making amendments to the grant amount and the time frame for entering into contracts by the following acts:

- P.L. 100-687, enacted on November 18, 1988;
- Department of Veterans Affairs Health-Care Personnel Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-40), enacted on May 7, 1991;
- Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-86), enacted on August 14, 1991; and
- Veterans Health Care Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-585), enacted on November 4, 1992.

In 1993, the VA discontinued referrals of U.S. veterans to the VMMC, because the VA determined that the VMMC was not providing a reasonable standard of care. Until this time, the VMMC had been the primary contract hospital for the VA in the Philippines. Because of this change in the referral process, the grant-in-aid funding for the VMMC was last authorized by P.L. 102-585 through September 30, 1994, and the program was allowed to expire. However, Congress continued to appropriate funds for the program through September 30, 1996.[18] During a tour of the VMMC in May 2006, the VA Secretary announced that "the VMMC will receive a grant of $500,000, or approximately 25.5 million pesos, from the U.S. government to help the institution purchase additional equipment and materials for the treatment of Filipino veterans."[19] The VA currently provides grants of equipment under the authority of 38 U.S.C. §1731.

Non-Health Care Benefits

P.L. 82-21. Enacted on April 25, 1951, P.L. 82-21 authorized funeral and burial benefits, including burial flags, for Commonwealth Army veterans residing in the Philippines (at half the rate of U.S. veterans). These benefits were not extended to New Philippine Scouts.

P.L. 89-613. Enacted on September 30, 1966, P.L. 89-613 extended dependents' and survivors' education assistance to include children of

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Department of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1995 (P.L. 103-327).

[19] U.S. Embassy Press Release, "Medical Center to Benefit from 25-Million Peso Grant; Hosts Visiting U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs," May 1, 2006.

Commonwealth Army veterans and New Philippine Scouts. These benefits were made payable at half the rate of the benefits for children of U.S. veterans.

P.L. 89-641. As a result of a Joint Republic of the Philippines-U.S. Commission study of Philippine veterans' problems, P.L. 89-641, enacted on October 11, 1966 changed how benefits were to be computed by providing for the payment of benefits in pesos based on pesos being equal in value to U.S. 50 cents for each U.S. dollar authorized. In 1978, testifying before the Senate Committee on Appropriations, the General Accounting Office (now the Government Accountability Office) stated that:

> [T]he intent of the 1966 law was apparently to restore Philippines beneficiaries to approximately their situation in 1946, taking into account the changes occurring in the economies and living standards in the Philippines and the U.S. since 1946. Since the law was enacted, however, legislative increases and devaluations of the peso have provided Filipino veterans with undue increases in benefits and has resulted in Filipino veterans achieving much higher levels of benefits than their counterparts in the U.S.[20]

Benefit Changes Since 1998

Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-169). Enacted on December 12, 1999, P.L. 106-169 expanded U.S. income-based benefits to certain World War II veterans, including Filipino veterans, who served in the organized military forces of the Philippines while those forces were in the service of the U.S. Armed Forces. Until the enactment of this act, recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI)[21] were generally required to reside in the United States to maintain their eligibility. This law enabled eligible Filipino veterans to return to the Philippines and retain 75% of their SSI benefits.

The Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 2001 (P.L. 106-377). Enacted on October 27, 2000, P.L. 106-477 changed the rate of compensation payments to veterans of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines and veterans of Recognized Guerrilla Forces who lawfully reside in the United States. P.L. 106-377 also authorized the VA to provide hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care to these two veterans groups, similar to care and services available to U.S veterans. In order to receive these benefits, they were required to be legal permanent residents of the United States and be receiving VA disability compensation. P.L. 106-377, also authorized outpatient care at the Manila VA Outpatient Clinic to service-connected U.S. veterans for their nonservice-

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[20] U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Veterans Administration Benefits Programs in the Republic of the Philippines, Hearings, 95th Cong., 1st sess., Aug. 31, 1977 (Washington: GPO, 1978).

[21] This program is administered by the Social Security Administration.

connected disabilities.[22] Prior to the enactment of P.L. 106-377, the VA was limited to providing outpatient treatment for U.S. veterans in the Philippines only for their service-connected conditions.

The Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-419). Enacted on November 1, 2000, P.L. 106-419 changed the amount of monetary burial benefits that the VA will pay to survivors of veterans of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and Recognized Guerrilla Forces who lawfully reside in the United States at the time of death.

The Veterans Health Care, Capital Asset, and Business Improvement Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-170). Enacted on December 6, 2003, P.L. 108-170 authorized the VA to provide hospital care, nursing home care, and outpatient medical services to Filipino Commonwealth Army veterans, veterans of Recognized Guerrilla Forces, and New Philippine Scouts. Currently, these groups of veterans are eligible for hospital care, nursing home care, and outpatient medical services within the United States.

The Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-183). Enacted on December 16, 2003, P.L. 108-183 added service in the New Philippine Scouts as qualifying service for payment of disability compensation, dependency, and indemnity compensation (DIC) and monetary burial benefits at the full-dollar rate, and provided for payment of DIC at the full-dollar rate to survivors of veterans of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and Recognized Guerrilla Forces who lawfully reside in the United States.

It should be noted that veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces have the same entitlement to monetary benefits in the Philippines that they would have in the United States, with the exception of home loans and related programs, which are not available in the Philippines. **Table 1** provides a summary of benefits currently available to Filipino veterans and survivors by category of service (Regular Philippine Scouts, Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, Recognized Guerilla Forces, and New Philippine Scouts).

Legislation in the 110th Congress

H.R. 760 and S. 57 would eliminate the distinction between the Regular or "Old" Philippine Scouts and the other three groups of veterans — Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, Recognized Guerrilla Forces, and New Philippine Scouts — making them all fully eligible for VA benefits similar to those received by U.S. veterans. Currently, neither bill has been reported out of committee.

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[22] 38 U.S.C. Section 1724(e). This clinic refers to the Manila VA Clinic, which is located at 2201 Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City, Metro Manila, and not to the VMMC.

Table 1. Filipino Veterans and Survivors, Eligibility for VA Benefits

Veterans' benefit	Regular, or "Old," Philippine Scouts		Commonwealth Army of the Philippines		Recognized Guerrilla Forces		New Philippine Scouts	
	Living in the U.S.[a]	Living outside the U.S.	Living in the U.S.[a]	Living outside the U.S.	Living in the U.S.[a]	Living outside the U.S.	Living in the U.S.[a]	Living outside the U.S.
Compensation for service-connected disability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[b]	Yes	Yes[b]	Yes	Yes[b]
Dependency and Indemnity Compensation/DIC (survivors)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[b]	Yes	Yes[b]	Yes	Yes[b]
Medical care	Yes	No[c]	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Education benefits[d]	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Education benefits for children	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[b]	Yes	Yes[b]	Yes	Yes[b]
Pension for nonservice-connected disability	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Death pension (survivors)	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Burial allowance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[b]	Yes	Yes[b]	Yes	Yes[b]
Burial flag	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Burial in a national cemetery	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Clothing allowance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[b]	Yes	Yes[b]	Yes	Yes[b]
Guaranteed housing loans	Yes	No[e]	No	No	No	No	No	No
Small business loans	Yes	No[e]	No	No	No	No	No	No
Veterans Employment Training Service (VETS)[f]	Yes	Yes[g]	No	No	No	No	No	No
Adaptive housing grants	Yes	No[e]	No	No	No	No	No	No
Adaptive vehicle grants	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No

Source: Table prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) based on information provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Notes:

a. Living in the United States as a U.S. citizen or legal resident.
b. Benefit is paid at the rate of 50 cents per $1.
c. Regular or "Old" Philippine Scouts residing in the Philippines are only eligible for hospital care for treatment of service-connected conditions. In addition, they are authorized to receive outpatient care in facilities other than the Manila VA Outpatient Clinic for service-connected conditions only. Finally, if they are service-connected, they are eligible to receive care for service-connected and nonservice-connected conditions at the Manila VA Outpatient Clinic based on resources available at the clinic.
d. The time period for using education benefits has expired.
e. Certain benefits are not available to any U.S. veteran living overseas.
f. This program did not exist in 1946.
g. Must be enrolled in a degree granting college or university.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much.

And now, Ms. Maria Luisa Antonio, Executive Director of the Veterans Equity Center.

STATEMENT OF MARIA LUISA ANTONIO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, VETERANS EQUITY CENTER

Ms. ANTONIO. Chairman Akaka and distinguished Members of the Committee, good morning. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before you on the Filipino veterans issue. My name is Luisa Antonio. I am the Executive Director of the San Francisco Veterans Equity Center, a 7-year-old agency in San Francisco providing direct services to Filipino World War II veterans and their families.

I am also speaking on behalf of the National Network for Veterans Equity, a coalition of different organizations advocating justice and equity for Filipino veterans. For the last 7 years, both NNVE and VEC have been advocating for the passage of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

Mr. Chairman, I have both the honor and the pleasure of serving the Filipino World War II veterans in my capacity as the staff of the Filipino Veterans Equity Center. These war heroes' stories have contributed to my knowledge beyond history books and documentaries. I am grateful to those who can bear to remember the bitter and painful memories of the tragedies of war and the sacrifices made under the United States flag to preserve freedom and democracy. Indeed, their stories have driven me to commit myself to serve our war heroes, the Filipino World War II veterans.

But I am also saddened by the fact that these heroes in their advanced age are forced to fight for the right to be recognized for the services they have rendered to this country. The face of struggle to pass the equity bill is in each and every veteran we serve at the Center. Every time a veteran receives a denial for his claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs, every time a staff hands a loaf of bread to a hungry veteran, and every time I console a widow who does not have enough money to bury her husband, I tend to wonder how the United States can forget the sacrifices made for this country and how this country can turn her back on its legal and moral obligation to those who made these sacrifices. I also ask myself how the Filipino veterans remain loyal to this country after all these years of injustice.

Yes, Mr. Chairman, these veterans remain loyal to the United States. Their belief in the democratic process speaks of their commitment to fight and gives them hope that the same process can grant them the justice they deserve, the recognition for their services.

A number of legislations have been passed since 1999 giving certain Filipino veterans certain benefits, such as the special veterans benefits also known as the SSI extension law, access to the VA Health Care System, and burial in national cemeteries. However, Filipino veterans are still not classified as U.S. veterans, making them ineligible to receive pension from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Consequently, these veterans are dependent on Supplemental Security Income, soup kitchens, and service agencies such as the Veterans Equity Center for support services.

Based on a Department of Veterans Affairs study in January 2001, the estimated total number of Filipino World War II veterans in the United States is 13,849, of which 50 percent live in California. Today, the estimated number of Filipino veterans drastically dropped to about 7,000 in the United States and 13,000 in the Philippines. That is the projected number of veterans in 2010, and we are in 2007.

With very few Filipino veterans remaining, our community stands at the shoulders of our heroes and renewed our commitment to fight with them. We, the younger generation, have become soldiers with a mission and we will not stop until full equity is achieved.

Honorable Members of the Committee, this is your only opportunity to impact the lives of the remaining veterans.

Now is the time to act. Now is the time to put an end to this injustice. And now is the time to pass the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. Thank you.

[Applause.]

[The prepared statement of Ms. Antonio follows:]

STATEMENT OF LUISA ANTONIO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SAN FRANCISCO VETERANS EQUITY CENTER

Chairman Akaka, and distinguished Members of the Committee, good morning. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before you on the Filipino World War II Veterans issue. My name is Luisa Antonio. I am the Executive Director of the San Francisco Veterans Equity Center—a 7-year-old agency in San Francisco providing direct services to Filipino World War II veterans and their families. I am also speaking on behalf of the National Network for Veterans Equity—a coalition of different organizations advocating justice and equity for the Filipino Veterans. For the last 7 years NNVE has been advocating for the passage of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Committee, I have both the honor and the pleasure of serving the Filipino World War II Veterans in my capacity as a staff of the San Francisco Veterans Equity Center. These war heroes' stories contributed to my knowledge beyond what history books and documentaries have offered. And I am grateful to those who can bear to remember the bitter and painful memories of the atrocities of war and the sacrifices made under the United States Flag to preserve freedom and democracy. Indeed their stories have driven me to commit myself to serve our war heroes—the Filipino World War II veterans. But I am also saddened by the fact that these heroes, in their advanced age, are still forced to fight for their right to be recognized for the services they have rendered to this country.

The face of the struggle to pass the equity bill is in each and every veteran we serve at the Center. Every single time a veteran receives a denial for his claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs, every single time a staff has to hand a loaf of bread to a hungry veteran, every time I hold a hand of a widow who does not have enough money to bury her husband, I tend to wonder how the United States can forget the sacrifices made for this country and how this country can turn her back on its legal and moral obligation to those who made those sacrifices. I also ask myself how the Filipino veterans remain loyal to this country after all these years of injustice. Yes, ladies and gentlemen of the Committee, these veterans remain loyal to the United States. Their belief in the democratic process speaks of their commitment to fight and gives them hope that the same process can grant them the justice they deserve—the recognition for their services.

A number of legislations have been passed since 1999 giving Filipino Veterans certain benefits such as Special Veterans Benefits (a.k.a. SSI Extension law), access to the VA healthcare system, and burial in national cemeteries. However, Filipino Veterans are still not classified as U.S. Veterans making them ineligible to receive pension from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Consequently, these veterans are dependent on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), soup kitchens and service agencies such as the Veterans Equity Center for support services.

Based on the Department of Veterans Affairs Study in January 2001, the estimated total number of Filipino World War II Veterans in the United States is

13,849 of which 50 percent live in California. Today the estimated number of Filipino Veterans drastically dropped to about 7,000 in the United States and about 13,000 in the Philippines—the projected number of veterans in 2010. With very few Filipino Veterans remaining, our community stand on the shoulders of our heroes and we have made a renewed commitment to fight with them. We, the younger generation, have become soldiers with a mission. And we will not stop until full equity is achieved. Honorable Committee Members, now is your only opportunity to impact the lives of the remaining veterans. Now is the time to act, now is the time to put an end to this injustice, now is the time to pass the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Ms. Maria Luisa Antonio.

Now we will hear from Ms. Jenah Yangwas, who is the granddaughter of a World War II veteran, representing Student Action for Veterans Equity. Jenah?

STATEMENT OF JENAH MARI PALOY YANGWAS, STUDENT ACTION FOR VETERANS EQUITY

Ms. YANGWAS. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Akaka and distinguished Members of the Committee. My name is Jenah Marie Paloy Yangwas and I am here on behalf of S.A.V.E., Student Action for Veterans Equity, which has worked tirelessly on the Full Equity campaign. I am truly honored to be here today as I represent the youth and my generation's voice on this issue.

The Brown Ribbon Campaign was started by SAVE in 2001 by a nationwide student-led and organized coalition made of students and youth advocates to signify the importance of equity for the heroes that have fought for us.

My family's roots and loyalty to the American flag is undeniable. My father, still living, served under the U.S. Navy for 20 years. I am a granddaughter and niece of Filipino World War II veterans. My paternal grandfather, Santiago Yangwas, served as a captain for the U.S. Armed Forces in the Far East. My uncle, Benjamin Carrido, served as a guerilla. And my maternal grandfather, Dionisio Paloy, was a Bataan Death March survivor. Although all of them are now passed, I recognize the incredible strength of our heroes. Our fight here today was their fight yesterday.

Before war had started in the Pacific, my grandfather Dionisio Paloy was employed as a mechanic in Baguio City. Shortly thereafter, he was called to duty and became a driver at the local American military base, Camp John Hay. His job was to transport ammunition from Baguio to Bataan.

During the Fall of Bataan, he was caught and he became a prisoner of war. He was placed in a concentration camp, where he was enslaved, forced to work in the fields to care for carabao with little or no food. He and nine of his comrades were able to escape. It took them months to get back home to Baguio City, as the terrain was mountainous and steep. Only four of the ten men reached Baguio. They were all mere skeletons and bones. My grandfather was the only man to survive the escape, as the others perished from hunger and thirst shortly thereafter.

We each hold a story, a story of struggle, a story of our soldiers witnessing the brutalities of war. Many of us come from points in history where our elders tell us about the great sacrifices and undoubted courage they have made in order for us all to be here

today. We are here to attest to the heroic strength and sacrifices our soldiers have made.

My grandfather's story is not isolated. He, like many others, had witnessed his countrymen fight bravely alongside American soldiers. He witnessed countless others die brutally in war. He joined forces with the United States to defend the homeland he loved. The sacrifices that our heroes have made are undeniable. As a community worker in San Francisco, I have been there to witness my heroes die at an alarmingly fast rate. I have been there to coordinate memorial services, to comfort the wives with their loss. We cannot wait any longer.

I am so proud to see my generation believe in this fight. Equity is so very important. Passage of the 1946 Rescission Act stripped away full veterans' benefits for Filipinos who were entitled. This stripped away the dignity of all the men and women that have fought under U.S. command. We are here to say that our soldiers will never be alone in this battle.

Passage of S. 57, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007, is important to us all and it has been long overdue. Sixty-one years is 61 years too late. Our heroes deserve full equity now. The courage, perseverance, and sacrifices made by these brave men and women who took it upon themselves to defend the islands against violent occupation are truly remarkable.

Lastly, we are here to stand up for them for what is right and for what is just. We are here to demand justice and full equity. We are proud of our soldiers, our history, our fight. Our heroes will truly never be forgotten. Thank you.

[Applause.]

[The prepared statement of Ms. Yangwas follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JENAH MARI PALOY YANGWAS, SAVE MEMBER, AND GRANDDAUGHTER OF A FILIPINO WWII VETERAN

I am here on behalf of S.A.V.E., Student Action for Veterans Equity, which has worked tirelessly on the Full Equity campaign.

Today marks the 65th anniversary of the Fall of Bataan. During this time, the Philippine Islands was also U.S. soil. Tens of thousands of American and Filipino soldiers were captured by Japanese forces and were forced to endure the Bataan Death March. Those captured were confined in concentration camps and pressed into forced labor. Thousands died along the way, while some were killed brutally. For months prior, these soldier who saw no difference if they were Filipino soldiers, American soldiers were heroically able to hold off the Imperial forces but on April 9, 1942, they were all forced to surrender.

My family's roots and loyalty to the American flag is undeniable. My father, still living, served under the U.S. Navy for twenty years. I am a granddaughter and niece of Filipino WWII Veterans. My paternal grandfather, Santiago Yangwas served as a Captain for the U.S. Army, my uncle Benjamin Carrido served as a guerilla, and my maternal grandfather, Dionisio Paloy was a Bataan Death March survivor. Although all of them are now passed, I recognize the incredible strength of our heroes. Our fight here today was their fight yesterday!

Before war had started in the Pacific, my grandfather, Dionisio Paloy, was employed as a mechanic in Baguio City. Shortly thereafter, he was called to duty and became a driver at the local American military base, Camp John Hay. His job was to transport ammunition from Baguio to Bataan.

During the Fall of Bataan, he was caught and he became a prisoner of war (POW). He was placed in a concentration camp where he was enslaved, forced to work in the fields to care for the carabao (water buffalo) with little or no food. He and nine of his comrades were able to escape. It took them months to get back home to Baguio City, as the terrain was mountainous and steep. Only four of the ten men reached Baguio. They were all mere skeletons and bones.

My grandfather was the only man to survive the escape as the others perished from hunger and thirst shortly thereafter.

We each hold a story, a story of struggle, a story of our soldiers witnessing the brutalities of war. Many of us come from points in history where our elders tell us of the great sacrifices and undoubted courage they have made in order for us all to be here today. We are here to "Remember Bataan," to attest to the heroic strength and sacrifices our soldiers have made.

My grandfather's story is not isolated. He, like many others, had witnessed his countrymen fight bravely alongside American soldiers. He witnessed countless others die brutally in war. He joined forces with the U.S. to defend the homeland he loved.

On this day, we are here to remember the sacrifices that OUR heroes have made! As a community worker in San Francisco, I have been there to witness my heroes die at an alarmingly fast rate. I have been there to coordinate memorial services and to comfort their wives with their loss. We cannot wait any longer!

I am so proud to see my generation believe in this fight. EQUITY is so very important. Passage of the 1946 Rescission Act stripped away "full veteran's benefits" for Filipinos who were entitled. This stripped away the dignity of all the men and women that fought under U.S. command. We are here to say that our soldiers will never be alone in this battle. Passage of H.R. 760 and S. 57 is important to us all and it's been long overdue. Sixty-one years is 61 years too late! Our heroes deserve FULL EQUITY now!

The courage, perseverance and sacrifice made by these brave men and women who took it upon themselves to defend the islands against violent occupation are truly remarkable. We are here to standup for them, for what is right and just. We are here to demand justice and full equity! We are proud of them—our history, our fight, our heroes will TRULY never be forgotten!

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Ms. Yangwas.

I want to thank all of you for your historical perspective on benefits of Filipino veterans, and now I have some questions for you.

Mr. Panangala, from your review of the relevant history, is it your understanding that the Filipinos who fought alongside the United States military in the Philippines were under the authority of the Government of the United States?

Mr. PANANGALA. The Presidential directive that was issued by President Roosevelt at that time was to give General Douglas MacArthur, who was the commanding general, authority over the forces in the Pacific. As part of that executive order, the Filipino nationals, as well, were incorporated into fighting alongside the U.S. forces.

Now, there is a distinction between the different groups that we need to understand here. The old Philippine Scouts were there before the United States had started the process of getting them independence. Then by the time they were in the Second World War, we were also in the process of giving them independence because the Philippine Independence Act had passed. So at that time, we got caught in the middle where we had to—where everyone came to fight alongside the U.S. under General Douglas MacArthur, so therefore, there was authority. He went by the President to bring the forces together.

But then eventually when we had to decide upon how would we draw the line between the benefits, then we distinguished between the Old Scouts, the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, who were generally recruited at the time of the process of independence, and the New Philippine Scouts, who knew exactly when they were coming on board that they would be eventually returning back into the Sovereign Republic of the Philippines.

Chairman AKAKA. It seems that there was a time when Filipinos felt that they were being regarded as U.S. veterans. Based on your

review, Mr. Panangala, of the history relating to those Filipinos who served with the U.S. forces during World War II, do you believe that these individuals were given an indication that they would be regarded as veterans of the U.S. military upon the completion of their service?

Mr. PANANGALA. There was—in the record, there was a study done by the Judge Advocate General in 1973 that had looked at the history of this. In some instances, there were messages transmitted by General Douglas MacArthur saying that there were certain benefits that they would be regarded as veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.

But at the same time, there was confusion, I think, when the Committee discussed this legislation in 1946. They wanted to find out what was the current legal status of these veterans and that is when the VA, when Senator Hayden turned to the VA and asked the question and the VA's understanding was that these veterans would be considered U.S. veterans. But the Senate wanted to make it absolutely clear because of the confusion prevailing at that time that we would start somewhere and clear the slate, and I think that was one of the indications, at least from looking at the record, that legislative intent was to start somewhere, and that somewhere was to include and say, OK, we will give you these benefits but then we are going to deem you not active service because we would be making the commitment to long-term obligations of the U.S. Government on behalf of the Philippine veterans, especially for those new veterans who would be recruited at that time.

Chairman AKAKA. In 1946, there was the Rescission Act that was passed by Congress that changed the status of Filipino World War II veterans. Again, based on your understanding of what happened in 1946, is it accurate to say that the Rescission Acts of 1946 changed the existing relationship between some Filipino veterans and the U.S. Government so as to remove their status as U.S. veterans?

Mr. PANANGALA. From the Congressional Record, or from the Congressional hearings at that time, there doesn't seem to be any indication of that. That would be something that we would have to defer to the DOD or the VA to make that distinction, if that was the case.

Chairman AKAKA. Ms. Antonio, how would the lives of the Filipino veterans you work with be affected by receiving a VA non-service-connected pension and other VA benefits?

Ms. ANTONIO. Well, two things, Mr. Chairman. One, it would restore their pride. They are very patriotic. They are very proud of fighting under the United States flag. So that will restore that.

The second one is more on getting them, if they were declassified as veterans, they will be declassified as welfare recipients, because right now, the United States is not providing anything because they are heroes. They are providing some kind of welfare because they are over 65, they are U.S. citizens, and they are indigents. So they will be removed from that classification.

And third, the pension. It will give them an option, because right now because of the restrictive rules of SSI, they can only live here in the United States and a lot of them are separated from their

families, making it very difficult for them, not having support services.

So those are the three things that come to mind when it comes to the impact of having non-service-connected disability pension.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you.

Ms. Yangwas, as a community worker who serves the Filipino community and as the relative of one of the veterans who fought for the cause of freedom in World War II, please describe your understanding of the impact of the Rescission Acts on the Filipino community.

Ms. YANGWAS. Visibly, how can you fully address the impact of 61 years of lost time? Time has made veterans socially dependent on social services, for instance, the soup kitchens for nutritional meals, difficulties accessing housing, where many I have worked with lived in the most roughest neighborhoods in San Francisco. The Rescission Act granted no access to veterans' housing benefits. When veterans became sick, they were turned away from the VA.

If the Rescission Act was never passed, veterans granted equity over 60 years ago, I would see my heroes not dependent on SSI to survive. Veterans would have been an active member of the working force.

Lastly, how can I really capture the impact of being a non-recognized veteran? For so many, the hardest part for us all is seeing so many veterans pass away, including my own family members, without equity. As each veteran passes, dignity can never be restored. We need to pass full equity now for all those who have fought for this country.

Chairman AKAKA. Well, I thank you very much and I want to thank this panel for your historical perspective of the Filipino veterans. Thank you so much for coming before this Committee with your testimony. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Chairman AKAKA. Now, I would like to call on panel four.

These panelists are all World War II veterans. Welcome to this Committee.

[Applause.]

Chairman AKAKA. Mr. Manuel Braga, Commander, Filipino World War II Veterans Federation of San Diego County. Also, Mr. Artemio Caleda, President, World War II Filipino-American Veterans and Auxiliary of Hawaii. Welcome and aloha to you, Mr. Caleda. Mr. Avelino Asuncion, who is presenting testimony on behalf of Mr. Patrick Ganio, who is President of the American Coalition for Filipino veterans, and Benito Valdez, from the Filipino Community of Seattle. In addition, Lieutenant Colonel Edwin Ramsey, U.S. Army, Retired, will be testifying by video.

I want to welcome all of you veterans to this hearing. I want to thank all of you for being here today. I want you to know that your full statement will appear in the record of the hearing and I would like to ask you to give your testimony in the order that I called you to the table. The first one will be Mr. Manuel Braga.

STATEMENT OF MANUEL B. BRAGA, COMMANDER, FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS FEDERATION, SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Mr. BRAGA. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Manuel B. Braga, former Staff Sergeant, Philippine Scouts, Army of the United States. I am currently the Commander of the Filipino World War II Veterans, Federation of San Diego County.

In 1942, during the defense of the Philippines against the Japanese in the Battles of Bataan and Corregidor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt promised the Filipinos who were inducted into the United States Armed Forces in the Far East, or USAFFE, on July 26, 1941, that their loyalty to the United States shall be amply rewarded.

We fought side-by-side with the American brothers-in-arms and remained loyal to America even after the defense of the islands was abandoned by the Joint Chiefs in favor of primarily defeating the Axis powers in Europe. Left to withstand the relentless and brutal onslaught of a far superior enemy, both in numbers and war materiel, Bataan finally surrendered, followed shortly by Corregidor. The sick and starved Filipino and American soldiers, not being made of impervious steel, reluctantly laid down their arms and sadly went into captivity.

But even after going through the humiliation of defeat and surviving the hell that was the Death March and countless atrocities in Japanese concentration camps, we continued to resist the enemy. As guerrillas, some led by U.S. officers who refused to surrender, we relentlessly harassed the Japanese Imperial Army unmindful of the indescribable hardship of trying to survive in the jungles and mountains with not only the Japanese as enemies, but natural dangers, diseases, and starvation, as well. We fought on until General Douglas MacArthur made good on his promise to return in 1945.

While in the thick of the fight against the forces of Japan, buying precious time for the U.S. to strike a counterblow, a very appreciative Congress enacted in 1944 what is now known as the GI Bill of Rights, thus paving the way for Roosevelt to fulfill his promise to us Filipinos of a just reward for our sacrifices. The Filipino soldiers, like all non-Americans who were serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, were entitled under the GI Bill to full veterans' benefits and include naturalization as U.S. citizens.

Victory finally came in September 1945. The guns fell silent. It was time to go home. We who survived shed our uniforms and turned in our arms and most of us went back to civilian life. But before the official end of that great conflict, some 50,000 Filipinos were recruited by the U.S. Army and were inducted into the Philippine Scouts. The Old Scouts organized in 1901, who made a name for themselves in Bataan, were integrated into the regular U.S. Army, and the New Scouts were used as occupation troops in Japan, its territories, and possessions which came under U.S. control.

But suddenly, an ungrateful U.S. Congress introduced a rider to the GI Bill of Rights, the now infamous Rescission Act of 1946, unceremoniously taking away from the Filipino veterans and members of the New Philippine Scouts all benefits, rights, and privi-

leges granted under the GI Bill and declaring the wartime of these veterans as not active service in the U.S. military. The Rescission Act of 1946 targeted only the Filipinos because other aliens, Europeans and Asians in World War II, were not affected. Thus began in 1946 the 61-year uphill struggle of the Filipino World War II veterans for recognition of their wartime services in the U.S. Army.

In 1946, there were about 250,000 Filipino World War II veterans. There are no more than 20,000 of us at this time. About 7,000 who opted to become U.S. citizens are residents of the U.S. trying hard to survive on their meager Supplemental Security Income, while there remain in the Philippines about 13,000 survivors receiving no benefits of any kind from the U.S. Government.

Today, we Filipino World War II veterans after six long decades see the light at the end of the tunnel. That light used to be always an oncoming train. H.R. 760, the Filipino Veterans Equity bill, ha passed through a Committee in the House and on this very day this Committee is conducting this historic hearing on S. 57, the Senate version of H.R. 760.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of this Committee, for inviting me here today. I plead with you, on behalf of all my fellow Filipino World War II, veterans to enact this bill into law and restore all the benefits previously granted to us under the GI Bill of Rights but taken away by the Rescission Act of 1946, along with our dignity and honor. Please do not make a distinction between Filipino World War II veterans who opted for U.S. citizenship and are residing in America from those who remain Filipino citizens and stayed behind in the Philippines. All of us fought for America against a common enemy and all of us should be entitled to the same benefits irrespective of our citizenship and/or place of residence.

Most of us are now advanced in age, sick and frail, living in abject poverty, but we share one thing in common.

We all willingly laid our lives on the line of this country in World War II. Thank you for your effort to correct this historic wrong committed against us. Thank you for not waiting until all of us Filipino World War II veterans are gone before taking action on our pleas. There are only a few of us left and we are dying every day. Soon, there will be no more.

Helping us now would not really entail a big expense for Uncle Sam because our number has been severely depleted. Any appropriation you may now approve to assist us in our twilight years would diminish on a year-to-year basis as our number continues to dissipate. Please do not think about this in terms of money. Think about restoring our dignity, honor, and self-respect.

As I conclude my testimony today, I thank you once again, Senator Akaka and all the Members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee for giving us the opportunity to be heard. Good bless you and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

[Applause.]

[The prepared statement of Mr. Braga follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MANUEL B. BRAGA, COMMANDER, FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS FEDERATION, SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of this Committee.

My name is Manuel B. Braga, former SSgt Philippines Scouts, Army of the United States. I am currently the Commander of the Filipino WWII Veterans Federation of San Diego County.

In 1942, during the defense of the Philippines against the Japanese, in the Battles of Bataan and Corregidor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt promised the Filipinos who were inducted into the United States Armed Forces in the Far East or USAFFE, on July 26, 1941, that their loyalty to the United States shall be amply rewarded.

We fought side by side with our American brothers-in-arms and remained loyal to America even after the defense of the Islands was abandoned by the Joint Chiefs in favor of primarily defeating the Axis Powers in Europe.

Left to withstand the relentless and brutal onslaught of a far superior enemy, both in numbers and war materiel, Bataan finally surrendered, followed shortly by Corregidor. The sick and starved Filipino and American soldiers, not being made of impervious steel, reluctantly laid down their arms, and sadly went into captivity.

But even after going through the humiliation of defeat, and surviving the hell that was the Death March and countless atrocities in Japanese concentration camps, we continued to resist the enemy. As guerrillas, some led by U.S. officers who refused to surrender, we relentlessly harassed the Japanese Imperial Army unmindful of the indescribable hardships of trying to survive in the jungles and mountains, with not only the Japanese as enemies but natural dangers, diseases and starvation as well. We fought on until General Douglas MacArthur made good on his promise to return in 1945.

While in the thick of the fight against the forces of Japan, buying precious time for the U.S. to strike a counterblow, a very appreciative Congress enacted in 1944, what is now known as the GI Bill of Rights thus paving the way for Roosevelt to fulfill his promise to us Filipinos of a just reward for our sacrifices. The Filipino soldiers, like all non-Americans who were serving in the U.S. Armed Forces were entitled, under the GI Bill, to full veterans' benefits to include naturalization as U.S. citizens.

Victory finally came in September 1945. The guns fell silent. It was time to go home. We who survived shed our uniforms and turned in our arms and most of us went back to civilian life. But before the official end of that great conflict, some 50,000 Filipinos were recruited by the U.S. Army and were inducted into the New Philippine Scouts. The Old Scouts organized in 1901, who made a name for themselves in Bataan, were integrated into the regular U.S. Army, and the New Scouts were used as occupation troops in Japan, its territories and possessions which came under U.S. control.

But a suddenly ungrateful U.S. Congress, introduced a rider to the GI Bill of Rights, the now infamous Rescission Act of 1946, unceremoniously taking away from the Filipino veterans and members of the New Philippines Scouts, all benefits, rights, and privileges granted under the GI Bill, and declaring the wartime service of these veterans as "not active service in the U.S. military."

The Rescission Act of 1946 specifically targeted only the Filipinos because all other aliens (Europeans and Asians from 66 nations) who served in the U.S. Armed Forces in World War II were not affected. Thus began, in 1946, the 61-year uphill struggle of the Filipino WWII veterans for recognition of their wartime services in the U.S. Army.

In 1946, there were about 250,000 Filipino WWII veterans. There are no more than 20,000 of us at this time. About 7,000, who opted to become U.S. citizens are residents of the U.S. trying hard to survive on their meager Supplemental Security Income, while there remain in the Philippines about 13,000 survivors receiving no benefits of any kind from the United States Government.

Today, we, Filipino WWII veterans, after six long decades, see the light at the end of the tunnel. That light used to be, always, an oncoming train. H.R. 760 or the Filipino Veterans Equity Bill has passed through Committee in the House, and on this very day this Committee is conducting this historic hearing on S. 57, the Senate version of H.R. 760.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of this Committee, for inviting me here today. I plead with you on behalf of all my fellow Filipino WWII veterans to enact this bill into law and restore all the benefits, previously granted to us under the GI Bill of Rights, but taken away by the Rescission Act of 1946, along with our dignity and honor. Please do not make a distinction between Filipino WWII veterans who opted for U.S. citizenship and are residing in America, from those who re-

mained Filipino citizens and stayed behind in the Philippines. All of us fought for America against a common enemy, and of all us should be entitled to the same benefits irrespective of our citizenship and/or place of residence.

Most of us are now advanced in age, sick and frail and living in abject poverty, but we share one thing in common: We all willingly laid our lives on the line for this country in WWII. Thank you for your effort to correct the historic wrong committed against us. Thank you for not waiting until all of us Filipino WWII veterans are gone before taking action on our pleas. There are only a few of us left and we are dying everyday. Soon there will be no more. Helping us now would not really entail a big expense for Uncle Sam because our number has been severely depleted. Any appropriations you may now approve to assist us in our twilight years would diminish on a year-to-year basis as our number continues to dissipate.

Please do not think about this in terms of money. Think about restoring our dignity, honor and sell-respect!

As I conclude my testimony today, I thank you once again, Senator Akaka and all of the Members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, for giving us the opportunity to be heard. God bless you and God bless the United States of America!

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Commander Braga from San Diego County.

Now I would like to call on Artemio Caleda, President of the World War II Filipino-American Veterans and Auxiliary from Hawaii. Mr. Caleda?

STATEMENT OF ARTEMIO A. CALEDA, PRESIDENT, WORLD WAR II FILIPINO-AMERICAN VETERANS AND LADIES AUXILIARY OF HAWAII

Mr. CALEDA. Aloha.

Chairman AKAKA. Aloha.

Mr. CALEDA. Good morning.

Chairman AKAKA. Good morning.

Mr. CALEDA. This is the voice of the more than 2,000 Filipino veterans residing in the State of Hawaii. Honorable Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, my name is Art Caleda. I am 83 years old. I was a guerilla during the war. I am a naturalized American citizen and I am the President of the World War II Filipino-American Veterans in Hawaii. I am greatly honored to be here and I thank you for giving this opportunity, and with my special thanks to my very own Senator from Hawaii, Senator Daniel Akaka, for inviting me to appear and testify before this Committee.

I register my endorsement of the passage of S. 57 and I would like to also convey my thanks to our very own Senator Inouye for introducing the original bill, S. 68, and I thank him for his efforts for introducing today S. 57 mandating the U.S. Government to confer full recognition and benefits to the Filipino veterans.

Today, we are already 65 years of sacrificing the injustice that has been treated to the Filipino veterans and it has been introduced for how many years. The bill was denied for reason that it has been closed by the U.S. Congress. Unfortunately, the Rescission Act, which was the main issue on S. 57 for amendment, the U.S. Government continued to deny, to delay the full recognition and benefits of the Filipino veterans.

For 65 years that we have been waiting for the recognition, the veterans have been treated unjustly and they are fading away very fast. Many veterans have died and have taken ill. Records of the Department of Veterans Service in Hawaii reveal that between 15 and 20 veterans die every year. In December 2006 and January

2007, for 2 months, eight veterans died in a short period. At present, we have now many veterans in the hospital, bedridden.

What I want to emphasize here is that veterans are getting older and older and they are sacrificing and awaiting the equity bill. So the injustice has gone so far that a lot of veterans are fading away.

I would like to cite the infamous Fall of Bataan, when 75,000 soldiers of the USAFFE, the guerrillas, and the Philippine Scouts were lined marching over 100 kilometers along the Bataan Death March, and close to 10,000 veterans have sacrificed during that infamous Fall of Bataan. These events will remain in the pages of the American history symbolizing the sacrifice of the veterans that were serving the United States.

Under the American standard, the veterans are living below the poverty level. As a matter of fact, veterans in Hawaii regularly go to food banks and they pick up some free food and free clothing. The veteran that is living alone in his room and he dies, he could only be noticed 2 or 3 days after when there is a bad odor going around. The worst thing to happen is that when a veteran dies, he remains in the morgue for two or 3 months because the family cannot retrieve him because of no money. The veterans, therefore, are living below standard. They cannot afford it. We resort to voluntary contributions to help the veterans for services.

What I am driving here is that we are suffering too much because of the injustice of the Rescission Act when it cannot be amended. Therefore, it becomes a scapegoat of the U.S. Government not to give us the full recognition of our benefits. Therefore, I think time is of the essence. We are running out of time. The old veterans will fade away.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I would like to invoke for humanitarian reasons as equally relevant with our legal rights and provided by the U.S. Constitution, therefore, on behalf of the veterans, I would like to confide to you our unconditional trust and confidence for your leadership and your advocacy to help pass legislation of S. 57.

I would like to offer three concerns for consideration. First, to honor the full recognition of the services of Filipino veterans. Second, to extend the full equity benefits that the veterans rightfully deserve. And, of course, the third is for Uncle Sam, I refer to His Excellency President George Bush to come to the succor of the dying veterans and to uplift their living standard.

I think that is all, in a nutshell, for my testimony today, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Caleda follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ART A. CALEDA, PRESIDENT OF WWII FIL-AM VETERANS AND LADIES AUXILIARY HAWAII CHAPTER

The Honorable Chairman, Distinguished Committee Members Aloha! Good Morning.

This is the voice of my Comrades, of the more than 2,000 Filipino veterans of World War II and Ladies Auxiliary residing in the State of Hawaii.

My name is Art Caleda. I am 83 years old, a naturalized American citizen residing in Honolulu, Hawaii. Currently, I am the President of the WWII Fil-Am Veterans and Ladies Auxiliary Hawaii Chapter. I am a retired Regional Director of Forestry in the Philippines and a retired Sales Associate in Hawaii.

I'm honored to be here. I thank you all for this great opportunity with my special thanks to our very own Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman, Senator

Daniel Akaka, for inviting me to appear and testify before this Committee hearing. I register my FULL support to pass legislation of the Senate bill S. 57, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007.

My thanks also to our very own Senator Daniel Inouye for introducing in 1992 the original bill S. 68 with identical title and the same language adopted in the current Senate Bill S. 57 mandating the U.S. Government to confer full recognition and full benefits to World War II Filipino American veterans.

However, the bill until today, failed to pass legislation and died a natural death at the closing of the U.S. Congress session every year.

BACKGROUND

I was a Guerilla Intelligence Officer with the 11th Infantry Regiment, of the United States Armed Forces in the Philippines (USAFIP) Philippine Army assigned in the Northern Luzon. I took my oath of allegiance under the American flag in response to the call by the military order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

I survived the war through blood and sacrificed with a shrapnel wound I suffered in my lower left chin during a mission to rescue a U.S. pilot officer, Lt. Paul Foster, of the 39th Brigade when we were exposed in the battlefront in the middle of heavy staffing and bombing by the Japanese troops. Many were wounded and some died during the rescue operation.

After the Philippines was granted absolute independence on July 4, 1945, the Rescission Act of 1946 created a new battle for injustice against the Filipino veterans of World War II when the U.S. Government unceremoniously stripped our well-earned honor and highly deserved benefits.

LEGAL BATTLE

In 1992, fifteen years ago today, our very own U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii) introduced the original Senate bill S. 68 with identical title and the same language adopted in the current S. 57 as the Filipino Veterans Equity Act 2007 mandating the U.S. Government to confer full recognition of the military service and benefits of Filipino veterans who served with the Armed Forces of the United States. However, the bill died a natural death at the closing of the U.S. Congress session every year until to-date.

The inability of the "power-that-be" to pass legislation of the bill apparently attributed to the failure to amend the Rescission Act of 1946 as a scapegoat of the U.S. Government to continue denying the Filipino veterans privilege and rights for benefits. Our long battle for justice with the U.S. Government had been unpopularly delayed and to think about it, justice delayed is justice denied, prejudicial to the welfare of the Filipino veterans.

Consequently, records from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of the Veterans Services, Hawaii, revealed that between 15 and 20 veterans died every year. In December 2006 and January 2007, eight veterans died in Honolulu, Hawaii, apparently attributed to a prolonged frustrations suffered by the veterans who are fast aging at their 80's of age and over, most of them are sickly, bedridden and poor, solely dependent on their SSI and Food Stamps provided by the U.S. Government.

To supplement their SSI income they collect empty cans and bottles and sell to the recycle redemption center. They frequent food banks for free food and second hand clothing. Some do backyard gardening to raise vegetables. They save money for their families in the Philippines. Most of the veterans just confine themselves within the four walls of their one bedroom. The scenario when a veteran dies alone, he/she is noticed because of the stinky smell after three or more days. The veterans really live a very miserable life waiting and hoping against hope for their equity benefits to alleviate their living from poverty.

FACTS

"On April 9, 1942—United States surrenders the Philippines leaving 75,000 USAFFE and regular soldiers to the Bataan Death March where close to 10,000 die along the trudge to POW camps. However, even after the American surrender, Philippine resistance to Japanese occupation continues." (Source: *www.fullequity.com*.)

The infamous Fall of Bataan that marked the treacherous Bataan Death March, the surrender of Corrigidor including other military installations and the Prisoners of War (POW) concentration camps located all over the country will remain historical events to remember symbolizing the sacrifices, courage, and loyalty of Filipino veterans in defense of freedom and democracy.

The organized guerilla resistance units in coordination with the reinforcement liberation forces exemplified their bravery and valor throughout the intensive mopping operations against the enemy and excelled over heavy battle until the surrender and

capture of Gen. Yamashita "The Tiger of Malaya" in the Central Cordillera mountain ranges of the Mountain provinces and Baguio City.

The war was the bloodiest battle we ever experienced considering the heavy toll of casualties. It is part of American history about the World War II in the Philippines when President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued the military order calling and ordering all organized military forces of the Philippine Commonwealth government to join the Armed Forces of the United States. Cognizant to the military order, we are entitled to full recognition and benefits provided by the U.S. Constitution.

However, the U.S. Government persistently continues to ignore our military service since 1946 until to date and avoid to grant our benefits rightfully due to us. While soldiers from 61 other nations who fought under the American flag received their highly deserved benefits. We, the Filipino veterans were singled out for exclusion.

It is unconceivable that Filipino veterans must be "killed, *disabled*, wounded, paralyzed, deaf, *half-blind*, and POW to be honored and eligible to benefits, yet they were all confined in the hospitals and military camps, while Filipino veterans with limbs intact and normal who carried and sustained the battle and survived the "Holocaust" of war were ignored of their military service and denied of benefits available by the U.S. Constitution. Both must be granted equal opportunity.

Mr. Chairman and Members of this August Body, on behalf of my Comrades, I confide to you all our unconditional trust and confidence to your leadership and advocacy to support passage for legislation the much awaited Senate bill, S. 57, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007.

To capsulize my testimony, I profess for consideration, the following:

1. The HUMANITARIAN aspect as equally, if not more relevant to the legal rights of the World War II Filipino American veterans benefits provided by the U.S. Constitution and promised by Uncle Sam.
2. The U.S. Government to rectify the injustice committed since the Rescission Act of 1946 against the Filipino American veterans who served in the Armed Forces of the United States.
3. To mandate the U.S. Government to confer FULL recognition of military service of Filipino veterans of World War II who served in the Armed Forces of the United States, under military order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.
4. The U.S. Government to grant FULL benefits to Filipino veterans of World War II for reason of their military service in the Armed Forces of the United States with equal benefits by the Americans available by law of the U.S. Congress.
5. The U.S. Government to save the lives of the remaining living Filipino veterans who are fast aging at their 80's of age and over and most of the veterans are sickly and poor dependent solely on SSI and Food Stamps provided by the U.S. Government.
6. To reward the Filipino veterans, much less not to be forgotten as heroes of freedom and democracy who bravely sacrificed through blood and life in defense of the people and nation.
7. The U.S. Government to improve the quality of life of the Filipino veterans as naturalized American citizens to live decently from poverty.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Art Caleda from Hawaii.

I now would like to call on Mr. Avelino Asuncion for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF PATRICK G. GANIO, SR., PRESIDENT, AMERICAN COALITION FOR FILIPINO VETERANS, INC., PRESENTED BY AVELINO ASUNCION, CHAIRMAN, SAN DIEGO CHAPTER, AMERICAN COALITION FOR FILIPINO VETERANS, INC.

Mr. ASUNCION. Honorable Chairman Akaka and Members of the hearing Committee, my name is Avelino Asuncion, a Filipino World War II veteran, a prisoner of war, and retired school superintendent living now in San Diego, California. I am now 87 years old. Allow me, therefore, to read the testimony of Patrick G. Ganio, Sr., a Filipino American defender in the epic Battles of Bataan and

Corregidor. He is the President of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, whose membership I think is about 4,000. He is unable to be here today because of his wife's present illness.

Mr. Chairman, first, I would like to introduce our lively Filipino World War II veterans here today. Will you please all stand, veterans?

[Applause.]

Mr. ASUNCION. Thank you. All of these veterans, Mr. Chairman, came from very far places to be here to attend this hearing. I, for myself, Mr. Chairman, came from San Diego, traveling for 9 hours through the plane.

We are greatly honored. I am glad to testify on behalf of my fellow war veterans and 4,000 members to remedy a historical injustice of the 1946 Rescission Act. We Filipino veterans deserve full benefits under the equity bill, S. 57 of Senator Inouye. We deeply thank you, Senator and the Chairman, for cosponsoring the equity bill.

Over the past two decades, we lobbied for the full range of benefits under the GI Bill of Rights for all of us who served in the defense of America. We Filipino veterans see the unjust and unfairness of the 1946 Rescission Act that the U.S. Congress passed. This law excluded most Filipino World War II veterans from receiving full recognition of their U.S. military services and benefits.

We do not need to rehash this complex and emotional issue. Simply put, our service in the U.S. Armed Forces cannot be considered as not active under the law. We Filipino veterans deserve to be treated as American veterans. The old reply of budget constraints to our request for equity is not acceptable to us.

[Applause.]

Mr. ASUNCION. Mr. Chairman, for the few of us remaining survivors, we hope and believe you won't forsake us. We are Filipinos by birth, Americans by choice. We served loyally as U.S. soldiers. What is the difference that prevents us from getting benefits that our American comrades receive? Is it discrimination, as President Truman has said?

Mr. Chairman, after a decade of our demonstration and lobbying on Capitol Hill and the arrests at the White House to call attention on our cause, we are at the last stage of our campaign for equity. We want equitable VA benefits for our poor and elderly veterans.

The major difference between what a low-income American veteran receives in VA non-service disability pension and a U.S.-based Filipino veteran is about $400 per month. Our veterans survive on Supplemental Security Income of about $600 to $700 per month. An additional $200 monthly benefit would bring our veterans to above the poverty level and to live in dignity and honor as a citizen of the United States. This $200 monthly income for the Philippine-based Filipino World War II veteran would bring him above abject poverty there and pay for the much-needed food, shelter, and medicine. We conservatively estimate it would cost about $22 million yearly.

President Truman said on February 20, 1946, when he objected to the Rescission Act, "We have a moral obligation to care for the Filipino Army veterans." Today, Mr. Chairman and the honorable Members of this Committee, we ask for what is due us. Please give

us the touch of your compassion and the kindness of your act of simple justice.

Please pass our equity bill. Thank you.

[Applause.]

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ganio follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PATRICK G. GANIO SR., NATIONAL PRESIDENT, AMERICAN COALITION FOR FILIPINO VETERANS, INC.

Chairman Akaka, the Honorable Sen. Daniel Inouye, and Committee Members:

I am Patrick G. Ganio Sr., a Filipino American defender in the epic Battles of Bataan and Corregidor in the United States territory of the Philippines during World War II.

As the national president of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, I am greatly honored by your invitation. I am glad to testify on behalf of my fellow war veterans and 4,000 members to remedy a historical injustice of the 1946 Rescission Act. We, Filipino veterans, deserve full benefits under the Equity bill S. 57 of Senator Inouye. We deeply thank the Chairman for cosponsoring the Equity bill.

Mr. Chairman, first, I would like to introduce our feisty Filipino American WWII veterans behind me today by having them stand up. They came very far to be here.

Over the past two decades, we lobbied for the full range of benefits under the GI Bill of Rights for all of us who served and bore the battle in defense of America. We, Filipino veterans, see the unjust and unfairness of the 1946 Rescission Act that the U.S. Congress passed. This law excluded most Filipino WWII veterans from receiving full recognition of their U.S. military service and VA benefits.

We do not need to rehash this complex and emotional issue. Simply put, our service in U.S. Army Forces CANNOT be considered as "NOT ACTIVE" under current law. We Filipino veterans deserve to be treated as American veterans. The old reply of "budget constraints" to our request for Equity is not acceptable to us.

Let me recall some relevant facts:

(1) The service we Filipino soldiers rendered in defense of the Philippines, then a U.S. territory, broke the Japanese 50–day timetable in 1942. We stood our ground in Bataan and Corregidor for a period of FIVE months and won America's admiration. General MacArthur noted the United States saved $15 billion dollars and thousands of American lives. During 3 years of Filipino resistance to Japanese occupation demonstrated our loyalty to our commander in chief, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and prevented enemy forces from reaching the United States mainland.

(2) After the war, the Senate Appropriations Committee deliberated on the rehabilitation of the Philippines. General Bradley, the Veterans Administrator, stated compensation benefit to Filipino veterans would amount to $3.2 BILLION. But the committee only approved $200 million. Hence the savings of $3 BILLION. Over the past sixty years, additional savings were made due to increasing deaths of my comrades who never tasted the health and pension benefits that they should have received. Sadly, many have died without the simple fairness of getting a pension while they lived in poverty. The reason: budget constraints. SORRY NO MONEY.

(3) During this current battle against global terrorism, the natural calamities around the world, billions and billions of dollars are foreign aid flowed. But none for poor and disabled Filipino veterans who loyally served America.

Mr. Chairman, for the few of us remaining survivors, we hope and believe you won't forsake us. We are Filipinos by birth, Americans by choice. We served loyally as U.S. soldiers. What is the difference that prevents us from getting benefits that our American comrades receive? Is it discrimination as President Truman has said?

We appreciate that U.S. Congress has restored U.S. citizenship rights, VA burial benefits, war related injury compensation, and much needed VA health care. Our Filipino veterans in the United States now have their VA identification cards. However, they are missing the last benefit.

Mr. Chairman, after a decade of our demonstrations and lobbying on Capitol Hill and arrests at the White House to call attention on our cause, we are at the last stage of our campaign for Equity. We want equitable VA pensions for our poor and elderly veterans.

The major difference between what a low-income disabled American veteran receives in VA NON-service disability pension and a U.S. based Filipino veteran is about $200 per MONTH.

Our Filipino veteran subsists on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) of $600 and Food Stamps. An additional $200 monthly would bring our veteran to above the poverty level and live in dignity in the U.S.

This $200 dollars monthly income for the Philippine-based Filipino WWII veteran would bring him above abject poverty there and pay for much needed food, shelter and medicines. The Philippine Government has shared in their responsibility for providing an "old age pension" of less than $100 per month. We estimate it would cost about $22 MILLION yearly to provide this last benefit to less than 10,000 Filipino veterans in the U.S. and in the Philippines.

President Truman said on February 20, 1946, when he objected to the Rescission Act, " We have a morale obligation to care for the Philippine Army veterans."

Today, Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of this Committee, we ask for what is due us. Please give us a touch of your compassion and kindness: your act of simple justice. Pass our Equity bill.

Thank you.

We will be glad to answer your questions.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Avelino Asuncion. As I understand it, you are representing Mr. Patrick Ganio, who is the President of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, and I thank you very much for your testimony.

At this time, I would like to call on Benito Valdez from Seattle.

STATEMENT OF BENITO VALDEZ, FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERAN

Mr. VALDEZ. Honorable legislators, my name is Benito Valdez. I am 83 years old and I am a World War II veteran.

In my unit from the Philippines, I am one of the only three surviving members. Two of us live in Washington State.

I come before you today to seek help and understanding. Let me begin by thanking you for allowing me this rare opportunity to be part of the voice of the more than 200,000 forgotten Filipino warriors of freedom.

I am an old soldier who fought the World War II that was not ours, a war that devastated my homeland and killed countless young men and women of my generation. That war left a deep and bitter wound that up to this day has not been healed. If I express frustration as I testify before you, it merely echoes the betrayal of a soldier who has served well, but has suffered more than 60 years.

When my unit of 100 Filipino soldiers and guerrillas helped American commandos to free 600 American and Canadian prisoners of war in the Philippines in Cabanatuan, in that daring raid in the garrison of Cabanatuan, Philippines, we served with honor and loyalty. Today, 63 years later, that loyalty and sense of duty has not faded away. Many of us aging Filipino war veterans believe that it is our American allies who have instead forgotten us.

There are less than 100 of us living in Washington State. With an estimated 5,000 Filipino World War II veterans living in America and the 14,000 still in the Philippines, we are a fast-fading, marginalized population. Our cry for justice has gotten this far and we thank many advocates and supporters who continue to stand with us.

A widower, I live alone in a small place near a chapel. My daughter, a doctor who cannot practice in America, is here on a temporary visa as a church worker and to take care of me. I have petitioned for my children and have been waiting for 14 years. Meanwhile, a heart bypass has prolonged my life. I live on Social Security Income and pray that my life is extended some more. Each year, I am feeling weaker.

Please, honorable legislators of the United States of America, pause a minute and think how difficult it has been for us forgotten soldiers and our families. Many of the original 200,000 conscripted comrades of mine have passed away, angry, disappointed, defeated. I am one of the last 20,000 still around to carry on the final battle. Yes, we are angry, but we are too weak now to argue or raise our voice.

Our one final appeal we make in our twilight years is to give us what we have rightfully earned. We are not begging. We need your help and understanding so that you will now pass laws that will give us full veterans' benefits. That means you would allow us to regain our dignity and to live a few remaining years in our lives in the company of our sons and daughters in this benevolent land of America.

I salute you all and thank you on behalf of my fellow veterans. God bless us all.

[Applause.]

[The prepared statement of Mr. Valdez follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BENITO VALDEZ, FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERAN

Honorable Legislators, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before you today.

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I salute all of you and thank you on behalf of all my fellow veterans. God bless us all.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Valdez from Seattle.

And now, our final testimony will be from Lieutenant Colonel Edwin Ramsey, U.S. Army, Retired, and he will be testifying via video.

STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL EDWIN PRICE RAMSEY (RET.), WORLD WAR II VETERAN

Colonel RAMSEY [via videoconference]. Thank you, Chairman Akaka and honorable Members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs. My name is Edwin Ramsey. I appeared before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on the same subject on November 5, 1993, on July 7 in 1998, and again on February 15 of this year, where copies of my testimony appear in more detail in the Congressional records of those hearings.

On May the 9th of this year, I turn 90, and I will never have another chance to contribute in some small way to correcting a longstanding gross injustice to the Filipino veterans of World War II. To do so, it is important that you be aware of why I was in a unique position during that time period.

In 1941, I was a lieutenant in the 26th Cavalry Regiment, Philippine Scouts, a regular unit of the United States Army with whom I fought for the Japanese landing in Lingayen Gulf through the Battle of Bataan. After Bataan surrendered on April 9, 1942, my troop commander, Captain Joseph R. Barker II, and I escaped and made our way to Pampanga Province in Central Luzon, where we met Colonel Claude Thorp, whom General MacArthur had sent out of Bataan in January to establish resistance forces behind enemy lines. We joined Colonel Thorp and began the guerrilla forces in Central Luzon, designated the East Central Luzon Guerilla Area, or ECLGA, under the Luzon Guerilla Army Forces of Colonel Thorp. After the capture of both Thorp and Barker and their later execution, in early January 1943, I became the commander of the ECLGA. By the time General MacArthur returned to Luzon, it had grown to approximately 45,000 guerilla troops.

With that background, I would like to address the question of the status of Filipino veterans and their treatment, especially in respect to the Rescission Acts of 1946.

In July 1941, President Roosevelt authorized through the War Department the formation of the United States Army Forces in the Far East, or USAFFE, under the command of General MacArthur and ordered the induction of the military forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines into and as part of the USAFFE. It is impossible to see how these Filipino troops could be Federalized into the USAFFE and not be part of the United States Army. Further, when we inducted the Filipinos into the guerilla forces, we required that they all swear an oath of allegiance to the United States of America and the Commonwealth of the Philippines.

Therefore, all those guerrillas that were recognized after the liberation would have to have the same status. In that connection, I question why there was a difference in the treatment accorded to the 65,000 or so Commonwealth of Puerto Rico troops and those from Hawaii and elsewhere who served in the United States Army and were later treated the same as American veterans.

The USAFFE forces fought courageously, delaying the Japanese time table for several months instead of the 6 weeks General

Homma had been given by the Japanese High Command to conquer the Philippines. This probably saved Australia from the Japanese. Also, remember that only the Filipinos remained loyal to their former colonial masters, while the Indo-Chinese turned on the French, the Indonesians on the Dutch, and Malaya and Burma on the British. It was this unbelievable loyalty that provided the environment necessary to build the massive guerilla forces that made it impossible for the Japanese to defend in a serious way against the liberating Allied forces and ultimately saved thousands of American and Allied lives.

General MacArthur confirmed this to me personally in a meeting I had with him in Tokyo in March 1947. At that time, he gave me an autographed photograph dedicated, "To Ramsey with the admiration and affection of his old comrade-in-arms, Douglas MacArthur," my most prized possession.

For the sake of brevity today, please see my testimony appearing in the Congressional records of the hearings of 1993 and 1998 cited above. I would especially call your attention to President Roosevelt's request to Congress in a letter of October 6, 1943, wherein he said, "to make provision for the physical and economic rehabilitation of the Philippines made necessary by the ravages of war which the invaders have inflicted upon them. All this is due the Filipino people in recognition of their heroic role in this war and the political ties which have bound us together in the past." It should be remembered by us all today that this plea was made in 1943, at a time when morale was very low worldwide, and particularly in Asia, and there was a great deal of uncertainty in our fortunes of war at the time.

It is my belief that had President Roosevelt lived, he never would have sanctioned an agreement so demeaning to the Filipinos as has resulted in the Rescission Act of 1946.

Thank you for your attention.

[Applause.]

[The prepared statement of Colonel Ramsey follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL EDWIN PRICE RAMSEY (RET.), WORLD WAR II VETERAN

Chairman Akaka and Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

My name is Edwin Ramsey and I thank you for the opportunity to be heard by you today. I have appeared before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on this same subject on November 5, 1993, on July 2, 1998, and again on February 15th of this year, wherein copies of my testimonies appear in more detail in the Congressional Records of those hearings.

On May 9th of this year, I will turn 90 and I will never have another chance to contribute, in some small way, to correcting a longstanding gross injustice to the Filipino veterans of World War II. To do so, it is important that you be aware of why I was in a unique position during that time period.

In 1941, I was a lieutenant in the 26th Cavalry Regiment, Philippine Scouts, a regular unit of the U.S. Army with whom I fought from the Japanese Landing in Lingayen Gulf through the Battle of Bataan. After Bataan surrendered on April 9, 1942, my troop commander, Capt. Joseph R. Barker II and I escaped and made our way to Pampanga Province in Central Luzon, where we met Col. Claude Thorp whom General MacArthur had sent out of Bataan in January to establish resistance behind the enemy lines.

We joined Col. Thorp and began the Guerrilla forces in Central Luzon designated by Col. Thorp to be the "East Central Luzon Guerrilla Area" or ECLGA, under the "Luzon Guerrilla Army Forces" of Col. Thorp. After the capture of both Thorp and Barker, and later their execution, in early January 1943, I became the commander

of the ECLGA. By the time Gen. MacArthur returned to Luzon, it had grown to approximately 45,000 guerrilla troops.

With that background, I would like to address the question of the status of Filipino veterans and their treatment, especially with respect to the Rescission Act of 1946. In July 1941, President Roosevelt authorized, through the War Department, the formation of the "United States Army Forces in the Far East" or USAFFE, under the command of General Douglas MacArthur and ordered the induction of the military forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines into and as part of the USAFFE. It is impossible to see how these Philippine troops could be Federalized into the USAFFE and not be part of the United States Army.

Further, when we inducted the Filipinos into the guerrilla forces, we required that they all swear an oath of allegiance to the United States of America and the Commonwealth of the Philippines. Therefore, all those guerrillas that were *recognized* after the liberation would have the same status. In that connection, I question why there was a difference in the treatment accorded to the 65,000 or so Commonwealth of Puerto Rico troops and those from Hawaii and elsewhere, who served in the U.S. Army and were later treated the same as American veterans.

The USAFFE forces fought courageously, delaying the Japanese timetable for several months, instead of the 6 weeks General Homma had been given by the Japanese High Command to conquer the Philippines. This probably saved Australia from the Japanese. Also, remember that *only the Filipinos remained loyal to their former colonial masters* while the Indo-Chinese turned on the French, the Indonesians on the Dutch, and Malaya and Burma on the British.

It was this unbelievable loyalty that provided the environment necessary to build the massive guerrilla forces that made it impossible for the Japanese to defend, in any serious way, against the liberating Allied Forces and ultimately saved thousands of American and Allied lives. General MacArthur confirmed this to me in a meeting I had with him at his headquarters in Tokyo in March 1947. At that time, he gave me an autographed photo signed, "To Ramsey with the admiration and affection of his old comrade in arms, Douglas MacArthur." My most prized memento.

For the sake of brevity here today, please see my testimony appearing in the Congressional Records of the hearings of 1993 and 1998 cited above. I would especially call your attention to President Roosevelt's request to Congress in his letter of October 6, 1943, wherein he said, inter alia, "to make provisions for the physical and economic rehabilitation of the Philippines made necessary by the ravages of war which the invaders have inflicted upon them. *All this is due the Filipino people in recognition of their heroic role in this war and the political ties which have bound us together in the past."*

It should be remembered by us all today, that this plea was made in 1943, when morale was very low worldwide and particularly in Asia, and there was a great deal of uncertainty in our fortunes of war at the time. It is my belief that had President Roosevelt lived, he never would have sanctioned an agreement so demeaning to the Filipinos as resulted by the Rescission Act of 1946.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Chairman AKAKA. I want to thank Colonel Ramsey very much for his testimony. We will include his written testimony in the record of this hearing.

Again, I want to thank this panel for your testimony and I have one question that I would like to ask each one of you and that is about the question of obligation. While you served with U.S. Forces during World War II, what was your understanding of the obligation of the United States to you after your service? I will ask you in the order in which you spoke. Mr. Braga?

Mr. BRAGA. During the guerilla, 1942, I was only almost 16 and I was discharged from the guerilla in May 1945, and I didn't receive anything. I was not recognized because when I was called to be processed, I was already in Okinawa as a Philippine Scout. So I was not processed. I was recruited by the U.S. Army to be a Philippine Scout, and after training in Okinawa, I was in Okinawa for 2 years, and after 2 years, it was December 1948. I was transferred to Fort William McKinley in Manila. I was attached to the 63rd Military Police. We turned over the camp, it was Nichols Air Base

and Fort William McKinley, to the Philippine Government. And after that, we were discharged.

And it was—I have a long story. We were discharged in McKinley. That was May 4, 1949. After a month, I started looking for a job. Nobody hired me because I got TB. We don't have any physical examination when we were discharged and I got that TB until 1993. That was healed in Honolulu. It is hard to explain, and I don't know why the U.S. Government did these things to us.

When we were recruited by the U.S. Army, we were promised the same salary as the U.S. Army, but when we were already in the service, they only gave us $25 a month. When we got our discharge, we were demoted one rank down. I don't know why.

Now, about this pension in the Philippines, we call it old-age pension, there were portions that were not given us, because according to them, those who were enlisted after July 4, 1946, they are not qualified, because according to them, they did not help the Philippine Government. Actually, the truth is, we, Philippine Scouts, we did not serve the Philippine Government. We served the U.S. Government. Our work in Okinawa, reconstruction, and then working with this big construction company in California, constructing the roads there. I forgot the name of the construction company. We were working together in Okinawa for two years constructing bridges, roads, barracks, and everything and this is what happened to us.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Braga, on your understanding of the obligation of the United States to you after the service.

Let me call on Art Caleda.

Mr. CALEDA. Mr. Chairman, it is clearly provided in the Military Order of my Commander in Chief, then President Franklin D. Roosevelt, when we were ordered to join the Armed Forces of the United States. I took my oath of allegiance under the American flag when I joined the military of the U.S. Armed Forces, and fought side-by-side with the American troops. My understanding with that military order, it was a promise by no less than the President of the United States that the services of Filipino soldiers and now Filipino veterans are entitled for benefits and pension. That is my understanding of the obligation of the United States, of the U.S. Government. It was my sworn duty to serve during the war the Government of the United States.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you. Thank you very much, Art Caleda.

And now, Mr. Asuncion.

Mr. ASUNCION. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, for one, I was recruited by virtue of the provision of the National Defense Act of the Philippines wherein it required that all college students attending regular classes in the universities and schools of the Philippines had to take the ROTC, this Reserve Officer Training Corps. Before we graduated, Mr. Chairman, from the ROTC—I was enrolled in one of the colleges in the Philippines—we were called to have what we called the summer cadre training. We understood, Mr. Chairman, that our being called to come to training during the month of April 1939, there seems to be a war coming. We don't know who will declare the war. So we got the training for two months.

Before we graduated from the training, Mr. Chairman, we were already assigned our mobilization centers before we went home from the training course. So, Mr. Chairman, because I graduated second chair in the college, I started teaching in the Philippines as an elementary school teacher. I want to inform you, Mr. Chairman, that I was still 22 when I received my transportation order for war duty. To my delight, Mr. Chairman, I represented the spirit of young Filipinos, eager ever to hold a gun to fight in any battle. So, Mr. Chairman, when we were called to active duty, we never read or had known that the United States Army through the President would conscript us, but we were willing as young soldiers to fight.

So whether they promised us payment or not, we understood that the U.S. Army will have to pay us because we have been conscripted under the United States Army. And so, Mr. Chairman, for that matter, I do not know of any time when I got any promise of the President of the United States to be paid or not, but just the same, the spirit of the Filipino young soldier to fight was the idea behind driving me to the army. I was still single when I was recruited in the army. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Avelino Asuncion.

And now, Mr. Benito Valdez, your understanding of the obligation of the United States——

Mr. VALDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question is very good. What was your understanding of the obligation of the United States to you? That is what we are here for now, Mr. Chairman. I want to fully answer a few words, because I showed my love to the United States by rendering services in the armed forces. What I expect now is I also want the return of the love of the United States to me, to us, by giving us the full veterans' benefit. Thank you, sir.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you. Let me ask you a final question. To each of you, please describe and talk about your interaction with American troops and commanders during the war. Mr. Braga?

Mr. BRAGA. In Okinawa, ever since we were recruited, our officers are all Americans. There are only a few Filipino officers. All of them are Americans. When I was into the cadre school, there are about one-half Americans.

We were about 120 and about one-half are Americans. After graduation from the cadre school, all those Americans are our commanders and we Filipinos are non-commissioned officers on active appointment. But it did not take long, especially when the trainees graduated. We got promoted actually. So when they sent me to Okinawa, I was—but from company commander, platoon leader, battalion commander, regimental commander, all Americans.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Braga.

Art Caleda?

Mr. CALEDA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. After I took my oath of allegiance under the American flag, the order was so clear that I had to join the Armed Forces of the United States and fought side-by-side with the American troops. In one dangerous operation during the war, I remember on March 4, 1945, we had a very risky mission to rescue one U.S. Air Force pilot officer by the name of Lieutenant Paul Foster of the 39th Brigade. In that rescue operation, we were subjected to heavy bombing by the Japanese troops

where I suffered a shrapnel wound on my left chin and I saved the life of my comrade American officer.

And my relationship to our American troops, I was under the command of Colonel Russell Volckman, U.S. Army, and my area commander was U.S. Army Colonel Donald Blackburn. We were under the command of the American troops. We were so loyal with our comrades-in-arms. We fought during the war. We survived the "holocaust" of the war in battle side-by-side with the American troops. And with the combined forces of the guerillas, I was a guerilla then, and the reinforcement liberation forces of General Douglas MacArthur at the time when we were conducting continuous mopping operation, led to the surrender and capture of General Yamashita and the liberation of Northern Luzon.

And so it cannot be denied of our close camaradeie—it can be said that we have exemplified a very close relationship with the American troops with a unified sacrifice, courage and loyalty in defense of freedom and democracy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Caleda.

Mr. Avelino Asuncion?

Mr. ASUNCION. My chance to interrelate with Americans for years during my life in the Army was during the time I was a prisoner of war. I remember that from the Baguio regions to Manila, prisoners of war were brought to Manila by Japanese boats. And in the Japanese vessel, they had to serve us food, and it happened, my dear Chairman, that we were a little bit treated better than the Americans by the Japanese. I was commissioned to distribute food to the prisoners of war, including the Americans who were with us in the boat, and naturally, I know that the Americans were my brothers-in-arms and so I had to give them more food. They were very thankful, and when we reached Manila, Mr. Chairman, we were imprisoned in the "Bilibid Prison" in Manila. I saw most American prisoners were there, they came from Corregidor. Just the same, I treated the Americans—because they were my brothers-in-arms—I used to give them more food than what I had given to others. So I was very thankful. In the concentration camp, in Camp O'Donnell, Mr. Chairman, we used to get food from the headquarters, and the same, I treated our American brothers better than what I treated others.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Asuncion.

Mr. Valdez?

Mr. VALDEZ. Thank you, sir. During my enlistment, we served during the liberation. We have rendered services in the right flank of General Dalton Pass, the road going to the Northern Luzon. That is, sir, where our unit was assigned during the retreat of the Japanese. That was the time when we were at the right flank of General Dalton Pass, assigned in a Spanish trail in Carranglan, Nueva Ecija. That is during the liberation. And the greatest mission we have participated in is in the rescue of the 600 American and Canadian prisoners in Cabanatuan, Philippines. We were awarded the Bronze Star Medal in that retreat. That is the most important reaction I have performed, rendered, to the American forces.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Valdez.

This has been a great hearing. In closing, I again thank all of the witnesses for appearing today. I know that some of you have traveled a great distance to be here to testify and to witness this hearing. I want you to know that we truly appreciate you taking the time to give us all a better understanding of the issues surrounding the service of the Filipino World War II veterans, and you have done that. It is now in the record and we will proceed from here on S. 57 and look forward to working hard on that.

So again, thank you very much.

[Applause.]

[Whereupon, at 12:08 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. HARRY REID, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEVADA

Mr. Chairman, I speak today in support of Senate Bill 57, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007. This important legislation would provide full restoration of veterans' benefits by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to surviving World War II veterans of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, the Philippine Scouts, and those individuals from the Philippines who served in the United States Armed Forces organized resistance units.

During the Second World War, President Franklin Roosevelt signed an executive order to draft Filipino troops into the United States Army. When the Japanese invaded the Philippines in 1941, it was the Filipinos who made up the majority of the troops there. Many of these men fought alongside American servicemembers, while others battled with organized resistance units until the liberation of these islands in 1944. Commander Francisco Cedula, who currently resides in Las Vegas, Nevada, was one of those individuals who fought in the southern front of Luzon. He led resistance fighters in cooperation with the United States Army in the liberation of a concentration camp in Manila on February 3, 1945.

When the war ended, these heroic Filipino fighters, including Commander Cedula, were stripped of their eligibility for full veterans' benefits and have only received minimal compensation for service-related disabilities. In the years since, our Filipino veterans have been fighting another battle—a battle with the courts and Congress—to receive the full benefits they deserve and were promised by the United States Government. Current law denies many of them full VA benefits, including pensions for low-income veterans over 65 and survivors' death pension. Other denied benefits include veterans' health care, home loans, education assistance, job training, and handicap adjustments for a house or car.

Last week, Commander Cedula presented me with his book entitled "The Endangered Species—Filipino WWII Veterans." This is the second book in which he has chronicled the bravery of World War II Filipino veterans and the subsequent struggles they faced after serving. After speaking to Commander Cedula and listening to his personal story, I believe that the title of his book makes a great deal of sense. These heroic men are an endangered species. The government must fulfill its obligations to all of our Nation's veterans and military retirees. For me, this is a matter of basic fairness and that is why I am a cosponsor of this legislation.

The Filipino Veterans Equity Act would allow the 50 servicemembers in the State of Nevada and approximately 7,000 Filipino veterans nationwide to be eligible for all veterans' benefits programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Of the 250,000 Filipino veterans who fought alongside the American forces, approximately 20,000 remain. We must fully restore the rights, privileges, and benefits guaranteed while many of these heroes are enjoying their twilight years.

I would like to commend my dear friend and colleague, Senator Inouye, for more than 16 years of service to end this unfair policy. I would also like to thank Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and other Members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. I look forward to working with you all on this important legislation.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. SHERROD BROWN, U.S. SENATOR FROM OHIO

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I am glad we are holding this hearing. In my home state of Ohio, there are approximately 13,000 Filipino Americans.

That is a small portion of the approximately 2 million Filipino Americans nationwide. The percentage of Ohio Filipino veterans from World War II is even less. This small number doesn't mean Ohio is not indebted to their service.

Whether it is the Veterans Memorial on Susanna Way in New Richmond or the Veterans Bridge spanning the Muskingum River in Zanesville, Ohio is home to numerous monuments celebrating the heroism of our Nation's veterans.

The Filipino veterans served our Nation with distinction. Like other veterans, these veterans deserve our respect, our gratitude, and our commitment to provide the compensation they have earned with their service.

The Filipino veterans were drafted into service by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and they answered the call of duty. They helped defeat tyranny at a time when America needed their help the most.

After the war, many of these soldiers were denied veterans status and deprived of the same benefits their American counterparts received. They proudly and bravely served this Nation in war; it is our obligation to serve them in peace time.

We have been negligent and are terribly late in providing for these veterans who fought for the Untied States. Today, we can make things right.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BOB FILNER,
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig and Committee Members, I thank you for holding this hearing on the "Filipino Veterans Equity Act" (S. 57), introduced by Senator Inouye.

The story of the Filipino World War II Veterans is well-known in Congress: how, as residents of a territory of the United States, they were drafted into armed service under the command of the United States Army by President Franklin D. Roosevelt; how they fought bravely, side-by-side with American soldiers, most notably during the epic battles of Bataan and Corregidor; how they suffered and died during the Bataan Death March and in prisoner-of-war camps; and how they successfully held off the enemy, allowing the United States precious time needed to disrupt the enemy's plan for conquest of the Pacific.

Hundreds of Congressmembers and Senators have cosponsored legislation over the years to restore the benefits and the honor that were stripped from many of these brave and loyal men by the Rescission Acts passed by the 1946 Congress.

Many were appalled by this act of Congress, viewing it as unjust at best but in truth, completely immoral. President Harry S. Truman stated on February 20, 1946, when the Rescission Acts were passed, "Philippine Army veterans . . . fought, as American nationals, under the American flag and under the direction of our military leaders . . . I consider it a moral obligation of the United States to look after the welfare of the Philippine Army veterans."

President William J. Clinton said, on October 17, 1996 as he signed a Presidential Proclamation on the anniversary of the 1944 return of the United States forces to liberate the Philippines, "I urge all Americans to recall the courage, sacrifice, and loyalty of Filipino Veterans of World War II and honor them for their contributions to our freedom."

On July 26, 2001 in his greeting to the Filipino Veterans, President George W. Bush said, "Filipinos fought with unwavering loyalty . . . under the command of General Douglas McArthur . . . and thousands gave their lives in the battles of Bataan and Corregidor . . . During the three long years following these battles, the Filipino people valiantly resisted a brutal Japanese occupation with an indomitable spirit and steadfast loyalty to America."

The issue of equity for Filipino World War II Veterans has always been a bipartisan battle. Over the years, I have been proud to join with Congressman Benjamin Gilman and Congressman Darrell Issa in the introduction of the "Filipino Veterans Equity Act" in the House of Representatives. Senator Inouye has carried the bill in the Senate for many years.

We have made some progress by passing access to VA health care and improvements in benefits for many Veterans who live in the United States. Now, it is time for us to resolve, in bipartisan unity, to complete the job and, once and for all, pass the "Filipino Veterans Equity Act."

This *must* be the year to pass the Equity Bill. Once there were at least 200,000 Filipino World War II Veterans. Now the estimate is that there are 20,000.

We *must*, as a moral Nation, face this issue directly and pass legislation to restore the benefits that were promised and earned but then taken away. We *must*, as a moral Nation, face this issue directly and pass legislation to restore the status of veteran to these honorable men, a designation they so richly deserve.

If not now, when?

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL Y. MAGAOAY,
STATE REPRESENTATIVE FROM HAWAII

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Committee, I am unable to be with you today, due to the critical time of the State Legislative process and so I offer my written testimony. I appreciate you holding this hearing concerning this very significant issue. The Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007 represents the solution to a problem that has gone unresolved since 1946. As a proud Filipino American, and as Chair of the Hawaii State Filipino Caucus I can assure you that the Filipino community is monitoring the progress of this measure, and are determined as ever to finally gain equity for these veterans.

In 1941, on the order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt 120,000 soldiers were drafted from the Philippine Commonwealth Army to fight alongside the U.S. Armed Forces in World War II. These soldiers served bravely with the promise of the same benefits as any other member of the U.S. Armed Forces. President Truman saw it as a "moral obligation" to take care of these Filipino Veterans. Unfortunately in 1946, the U.S. Congress didn't feel the same way, as they rescinded President Truman's promise to the Filipino veterans by stripping them of their U.S. veteran status.

The Filipino veterans of World War II are simply asking for what they are due. What they seek is recognition of the sacrifices they have made for this country. As I write this testimony we arrive at the 65th anniversary of The Bataan Death March, a famous example of the sacrifice made by the Filipino veterans on behalf of this country. While I realize that the benefits are the issue at hand here, what I believe to be the principal importance, is that our Nation recognizes and honors the sacrifice and service of these Filipino Veterans. This is a country that is built on honor and service, and so it is unacceptable for the brave military service of these men to go unrecognized for over 60 years.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Government of the Philippines estimate that this year there will be less than 20,000 Filipino Veterans living within the United States and in the Philippines. Most of them are well into their 80's and 90's and their numbers are dwindling. Many veterans have passed on with the memory of a promise unfulfilled. Let us take this opportunity to recognize and honor those who remain, and grant them what they were promised all those years ago.

As part of the Filipino package, I have introduced House and concurrent resolutions in support of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007. We at the Filipino Caucus are urging our fellow Hawaii State Legislators to lend their support, so that Hawaii's voice is firmly behind the Filipino Veterans.

Again, I would like to thank this Committee for holding this hearing. The work you are doing is invaluable in bringing awareness to this long standing injustice. It is my hope that this 110th Congress will see the passage of this measure so that the Filipino Veterans can receive what they are due: equal benefits and more importantly recognition and honor for serving this great country.

Aloha Ke Akua.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMY AGBAYANI, PH.D., VICE CHAIR, NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FILIPINO AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS REGION 12 (HAWAII, GUAM, AND COMMONWEALTH OF NORTHERN MARIANAS ISLANDS)

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and distinguished Committee Members, as Vice Chair of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) Region 12, I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony in unified support of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

NaFFAA Region 12 represents the interests of Filipinos in Hawaii, Guam, and the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands. NaFFAA Region 12 is an affiliate of the National NaFFAA, which is recognized by Washington policymakers, private industry and national advocacy groups as the Voice of Filipinos and Filipino Americans throughout the United States. We are a non-partisan, non-profit national affiliation of more than five hundred Filipino American institutions and umbrella organizations that span twelve regions throughout the continental United States and U.S. Pacific territories.

NaFFAA strongly supports S. 57 and H.R. 760 that would recognize the contributions of Filipino WWII veterans to the U.S. Armed Forces, and reinstate to them veterans' benefits that were dropped as a result of the 1946 Rescission Act. Your leadership is needed to bring social justice to our aging Filipino veterans. We are proud that Mr. Art Caleda, NaFFAA Region 12 leader, who is among the dwindling numbers of surviving Filipino veterans, is presenting testimony today. Please enact S. 57 and H.R. 760.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRYAN ANDAYA, ESQ.,
UNITED FILIPINO COMMUNITY COUNCIL (UFCH)

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and distinguished Committee Members, as President of the United Filipino Community Council (UFCH), I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony in emphatic support of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

Founded in 1959 to help Filipinos play a larger role in the State of Hawaii, the mission of the Council is to promote a sense of unity, friendship, camaraderie and mutual assistance among Filipinos in Hawaii while promoting and perpetuating the Filipino heritage and culture. Today, the Council consists of six Island Councils with jurisdiction over 100+ Filipino organizations and a combined membership of about 10,000 from every major island in the State.

The Council had passed a resolution at our statewide annual convention in July 2006 to support local and national initiatives to restore parity and equity for Filipino WWII veterans' benefits that were rescinded by the U.S. Government in 1946.

The yearlong Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission events in 2006 have raised community awareness, support and outrage at the humiliating plight of our Filipino veterans. The surviving Filipino veterans deserve their due social justice and no less for their loyalty and service to the U.S. Armed Forces, in order to protect America's diverse people and U.S. Territories. Your help to enact S. 57 and H.R. 769 is critical not only to the veterans' human dignity, but also to the international image of America's promise to allied troops yesterday, as well as today. Thank you for the opportunity to voice the views of our Filipino community in Hawaii. The Council thanks you for your public service to uphold social justice for all, not just a few.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JENNY L. BATONGMALAQUE, M.D.,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FILIPINO VETERANS FOUNDATION

Mr. Chairman, Senator Akaka, and Members of the Committee, I am Jenny Batongmalaque, a geriatrician, friend and advocate of Filipino WWII Veterans and all Veterans and most importantly an enlightened daughter of a Bataan Defender.

Before I validate my recommendations for policy in looking after the survivors and the ever-increasing number of widows, I am compelled to tell my story. I discovered a pocket diary of my father's war memoirs and his autobiography, a month after he died in 1995 at the age of 89. He had kept it so well during his lifetime, that when I discovered it, it struck me as a lightning bolt that changed the course of my life and kept my profession as a physician focused on the care of the elderly.

When I immigrated to the United States in a tumultuous year in America, in 1966, I was given the opportunity to pursue my highest attainment that is to practice medicine in the United States. I was the recipient of my father's educational benefits on account of his being a USAFFE Veteran. These benefits came from the Philippine Veterans Administration and that is how I completed my Medical degree.

When my father joined us in America, in 1975, he was jolted to find out that his services were not recognized by the USVA because of an existing law, unbeknownst to him and his comrades-in-arms. It is a law that still exists, the Rescission Act of 1946, which has denied them recognition of their services and therefore, their GI Bill of Rights. As a matter of fact he was not qualified to receive health services in the VA, because the attending clerk never heard of the USAFFE, the United States Army Forces in the Far East. My father never spoke of being a Veteran nor pursued any benefits in the twenty years he resided in America, since that initial rejection in 1975.

Hence, the impact of my total ignorance of his plight as a Veteran drove me to conduct a 10-year longitudinal study on 300 of his cohorts in the Los Angeles County. That was in 1996. Last year, I had published the results of that study which had been submitted to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing last February 15.

Seeing the rapid disappearance of the WWII Veterans, with only 10 percent left in the cohort study group and that goes extraponentially to the population group in question in the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007, I am urgently asking Congress to consider giving them the recognition they rightfully deserve, for the few remaining years left, for they have lived long enough, suffered long enough and deprived long enough as they approach their end of life.

We have noted the significant rise in numbers of widows. These are the octogenarian women who live alone and are victims of the poverty of neglect and want even while tending to their frail beloved Veteran.

If we go back in time to see how the wounded WWII GI soldiers were attended to when they returned home, since they found their mothers and sisters and wives not at home but working as Rosie the Riveters and some other employment to make a living, the wounded Veterans were provided a daily schedule rehabilitated in some Quonset hut at the base during the day, to return home at night in the safe and stable embrace of their families.

Similarly, or along simplistic lines, the plan of the Filipino Veterans Foundation, of which I serve as its Executive Director is to gather those in need of attention and place them in some Quonset hut or equivalent thereof, during the day for an adult day health care program, and at night return them safely to a stable environment wherever they choose to live.

We want to show our returning young, 19-year-old Veterans from the Iraqi war and all other wars that they are not to be abandoned as they return home and advance in years to face the challenges confronting their health, as all of them are victims of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, being exposed in harms way. Mr. Chairman, our Veterans ask for so little, in return for the sacrifice they had given so that we may all live in our own pursuits of happiness, giving us a chance to live in peace and democracy instead of war and terrorism.

The sons and daughters of these Veterans are ready, willing and able to return the favor by taking care of the frail elderly in America, which will soon be a fifth of the total population in America, projected to be much sooner than in the middle of this Century. These sons and daughters are filled with love and gratitude of their beloved Veterans' contribution to our democracy, and that tribute includes all Veterans of all wars, not just Filipino WWII Veterans who are few and far between and soon will be extinct.

So, find an empty lot for us, Mr. Chairman, whether in Central Los Angeles, East L.A., West L.A., South Bay or the Valleys and place one or two Quonset huts for us to demonstrate our program which will add quality to the lives of our Veterans and you will find that when you involve the family it will come out less expensive to our government because that tender love in the equation is priceless, which brings us closer to justice. And this is why I chose to be an American citizen, where impossible dreams can come true especially when the heart is in the right place, and in God we trust.

God Bless America!

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to express my views.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CYNTHIA C. CABOT, BOARD MEMBER, GUAM LIAISON, NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FILIPINO AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS REGION 12

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and distinguished Committee Members, as Board member and Guam Liaison to the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) Region 12, I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony in full support of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

NaFFAA Region 12 represents the interests of Filipinos in Hawaii, Guam, and the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands. NaFFAA Region 12 is an affiliate of the National NaFFAA, which is recognized by Washington policymakers, private industry and national advocacy groups as the Voice of Filipinos and Filipino Americans throughout the United States. We are a non-partisan, non-profit national affiliation of more than five hundred Filipino American institutions and umbrella organizations that span twelve regions throughout the continental United States and U.S. Pacific territories.

Social justice is long overdue for Filipino World War II veterans in Guam. As young men, they loyally responded to America's call to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. Their bravery in guerilla warfare played a vital role in bringing World War II to an earlier end, avoiding further bloodshed and suffering. As they age, the impact of rescinded veterans' benefits is taking a toll on their quality of life, yet their patriotism to the United States is unwavering. Thus, your support of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act is also about retaining human dignity. We look to your leadership to do the right thing. Please enact S. 57 and H.R. 760. Your important work on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee is greatly appreciated.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ARCADIO CALABAS, PRESIDENT, ILLINOIS VETERANS EQUITY CENTER AND THE AMERICAN LEGION FILIPINO AMERICAN POST 509

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

My name is Arcadio V. Calabas. I speak on behalf of the Illinois Veterans Equity Center and the American Legion Filipino American Post 509. The Illinois Veterans Equity Center is part of the newly formed National Alliance for Filipino Veterans Equity.

I served as 3rd Lt. Field Artillery, 301st FA Regiment with ASN 021326 of the Philippine Commonwealth under the command of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East from December 12, 1941 to June 21, 1946. My service was pursuant to the Executive Order of the U.S. President Roosevelt dated July 26, 1941.

INTRODUCTION

The world will long remember the epic struggle put up by the 75,000 Filipino and 12,000 American soldiers in the blood-stained jungles and along the rugged coasts of Bataan for more than three (3) months in 1942. They fought shoulder-to-shoulder against the superior force of the Japanese Imperial army in defense of freedom and democracy.

TESTED COMRADESHIP

Our comradeship with the American soldiers was tested in many ways. During the last month's battle, as we fought side-by-side in the battlefields of Bataan on empty stomachs—many ridden with malaria and weakened by malaria—we still maintained our high morale. After the surrender of Bataan, we marched together during the Death March and we suffered together in the concentration camp in high spirits even in the most adverse condition of starvation and widespread disease.

Despite the harrowing condition brought by the Fall of Bataan on April 9, 1942, the Filipino soldiers and the brave guerilla fighters under the command of U.S. officers had given the same undying loyalty to the American flag as the American soldiers did throughout World War II.

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE DEFENDERS OF BATAAN AND CORREGIDOR

With your indulgence, please allow me to state what could be considered the most important accomplishment of the defenders of Bataan and Corregidor—they disrupted the timetable of the Japanese forces in conquering the Philippines. This disruption prevented the Japanese forces from advancing to Australia where they could have built a strong military base and make use of the oil resources thereat. The war in the Far East could have been longer with tremendous loss of lives on the part of the U.S. Allied Forces.

For this accomplishment, the whole world will long remember the gallantry of the Filipino and American troops who fought and stood together in the face of overwhelming odds in Bataan and Corregidor in 1942.

SCARS OF THE WAR

It is indeed very hurting and disappointing that in 1946, U.S. Congress passed the Rescission Act that cutoff the promised benefits to the Filipino WWII veterans. However, President Harry Truman admitted and said then, "It is the moral obligation of the U.S. to look after the welfare of all Filipino WWII veterans."

For the past 61 years we had been suffering from injustice, unfair treatment and inequality because the U.S. Congress has failed to give us back the benefits that rightfully belongs to us. The gallant deeds of the Filipino WWII veterans have surely faded away in the minds of America's policymakers.

CONCLUSION

U.S. has spent vast amounts of money for Germany, France, Russia and Iraq in building democracy throughout the world but failed to reward those who fought and risked their lives 65 years ago to ensure the freedom and democracy we are all enjoying.

For the moment, we still have faith in America's goodness. With your enlightened consideration of holding a public hearing and taking on the issue plus the persistence of the Filipino American advocates, the last battle for FULL EQUITY may still be won—something all freedom loving Americans would like to see happen before the aging Filipino WWII veterans will all be gone.

I would like to end my testimony by sharing to you what Her Excellency Kristie A. Kenney, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines told me when I met her at the Shrine of Valor in Bataan last year, she said, " Mr. Calabas, thank you for your sacrifices, our world is more peaceful and prosperous."

Thank you and may God bless us all!

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHARLENE CUARESMA, PRESIDENT, FILIPINO COALITION FOR SOLIDARITY

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and distinguished Committee Members, As President of the Filipino Coalition for Solidarity, I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony in urgent support of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

Since its inception in 1990, the Coalition has represented more than 50 Filipino community leaders whose aim is to advocate for social justice issues, and to empower Filipinos to make socially responsible contributions to Hawaii and our global neighbors through community service, education, advocacy, and social action.

Filipino WWII Veterans equity has been among the top social justice issues for Coalition advocates. Reinstatement of veterans' benefits is also a matter of human dignity. In Hawaii, for example, the issue of family reunification is paramount for our elderly Filipino veterans. In November 2006, a Filipino veteran died in destitute with no next of kin. Immigration and financial barriers prohibited his family from coming to Hawaii to transport his remains back to the Philippines for burial. Our Filipino veterans have earned this entitlement by their commitment to the U.S. Armed Services. Filipino veterans bravely put themselves in harm's way to protect the interests of the United States and its citizens.

Your help to pass the Filipino Veterans Equity Act would go a long way to bring judicial closure and dignity to our Filipino WWII veterans. Please support the enactment of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SUSAN ESPIRITU DILKES, MEMBER, NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR FILIPINO VETERANS EQUITY AND THE AMERICAN COALITION FOR FILIPINO VETERANS

This week, I personally attended the funerals of two Filipino American Veterans of World War II. Both died without receiving any of the benefits they were promised when they joined the American Armed Forces in 1941.

My name is Susan Espiritu Dilkes. I am the daughter of a Filipino World War II veteran, member of the National Alliance for Filipino Veterans Equity and the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans. I am also the Executive Director of Filipino American Service Group Inc. (FASGI), a nonprofit community-based, social service agency in Los Angeles County, which was started in October 1981, when a homeless Filipino World War II veteran was found sleeping in the garage at the home of Mrs. Remedios Geaga, one of the founding members of our agency. Since then, FASGI has assisted thousands of Filipino American World War II veterans with temporary shelter, health and mental health issues, and food distribution. FASGI operates a transitional housing shelter for independent living for more than four hundred (400) World War II veterans.

In 1996, with the help of the Filipino American WWII veteran's volunteers, FASGI launched FILVOTE, the Filipino American Voters Mobilization, and has registered more than 13,000 Filipino American voters in Los Angeles County.

The first thing that I want to impress on you is the fact that most of the Filipino American World War II Veterans are in their 80's. Many are in poor health, and the time for helping any of them is rapidly slipping away.

An example of the urgency of this matter arose from our own work program, during the last year.

In early 2006, FASGI obtained a grant from the State of California to do outreach to Filipino American World War II Veterans who are still alive and living in Los Angeles. The goal of the outreach is to reduce the risks of poor health resulting from inadequate housing, and to refer homeless WWII Veterans to our shelter, and to enroll them in our Healthy Active Lifestyle Program (HALP). For the past twelve months, FASGI has worked at this outreach program, but has referred only six WWII veterans to our transitional housing shelter.

The reason for our lack of success is that there are so few of the veterans left.

If Congress does not act soon, there will be no one left upon whom to confer the benefits these men were promised over 60 years ago. This is your last chance to correct a wrong, which is now more than half a century old. I believe, you are men

and women, of good intention, and now, it is time for those intentions to be converted into law.

The second point worth noting is that there are benefits, beyond those that are visible on the face of this legislation. First, the passing of S. 57, granting full equity benefits for the Filipino American WWII veterans, provides the United States with an opportunity to rescue its reputation as a fair, honest and reputable country that honors its commitment by helping the remaining 7,000 Filipino American World War II veterans who are living in the United States. Our country can take a long step toward rescuing its own honor.

Third, passing S. 57, improves the foreign relations between the Philippines and the United States. It reduces the political irritation of an unfulfilled commitment to the 13,000 Filipino American World War II veterans who are living in the Philippines, and to the extent payments are made, it will improve the flow of cash to the Philippines, a poor country in dire need of foreign support and liquidity.

This is the last chance any of us will have to RESCUE, both the Filipino American World War II Veterans and the United States from a broken promise.

Finally, I would like to thank the Veteran's Affairs Committee Chairman, Senator Akaka, Members of the Committee, and your staff for allowing me to submit this testimony today.

Thank you, and please enact and promptly implement S. 57.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MAX C. FLORENTINO, PRESIDENT, FILIPINO WWII PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am a Filipino American World War II veteran resident of the United States, because of my 100 percent service-connected disability condition and 86 years old with severe pain all over my body, I can't travel from Los Angeles, California to Washington, DC, but as a duty to our country, on behalf of my fellow Filipino WWII veterans I do hereby respectfully submitted my reports on our relentless campaign in support of the U.S. Congress approval of H.R. 760, and S. 57, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007.

Since early 2004, when I attended the Filipino World War II veterans summit presided over by Congressman Bob Filner in San Diego, California in which the attendees were required to obtain 60 cosponsors of the H.R. 677, and while Congressman Filner pledge "to obtain 120 more than the current 41 sponsors."

I tried hard to find ways as to how successful we shall be able to get support for Congress approval of the Equity Act. At this critical juncture, I sent a letter for help to President George W. Bush in whom the executive power resides and I depend so much upon President Bush's premise and promise, of which it seems I can see all around me the President will not fail us Filipino World War II veterans.

I just followed President Bush's appealed for "patience in this hard tasks of securing America, which you have granted in good measure. Our Country has accepted obligations that are difficult to fulfill and would be dishonorable to abandon." We should not, then, rest our faith and optimism as we continue with our letters to the President, finally on the first week of January 2007, it has a very wonderful result. The President kept his promise and listened to us.

I received a letter from the White House which said: "We have sent your message to the appropriate Federal agency that can best address your concerns. After reviewing your correspondence the agency will respond directly to you as promptly as possible." The following week I received a letter from the VA which said: "The Filipino Veterans Equity Act, if enacted, would amend title 38, United States Code, to deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Accordingly, qualifying Filipino veterans would become eligible for all veterans' benefits in the same manner and at the same rates as United States veterans . . . President Bush and the VA have made the interests of Filipino veterans a priority. We are working hard to ensure they receive the benefits they deserve." This VA letter is a sure Republican support to the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees for the priority approval of Filipino Veterans Equity Act in the 110th Congress.

On behalf of my fellow veterans residents of the United States who are actually receiving disability compensation, I respectfully request you to include in the amendment of H.R. 760, our benefits. Here is the policy of the VA: While residing in the United States we are receiving full dollar rates, but if we go home to the

Philippines and stay outside the United States for 61 days, our service-connected disability compensation will be reduced to 50 percent of every dollar authorized.

I earnestly appeal to the Washington leadership—from the U.S. Congress to the White House to the Department of Veterans Affairs to consider my statement of facts that hopefully should lead to the Congress approval of H.R. 760, not for pity and mercy to the veterans of the Philippine Army and the Recognized Guerrilla Fighters, but it is an honorable act of Congress who has included the various Philippine military organizations into the service of the Armed Forces of the United States, during World War II.

Members of the 110th Congress cannot afford to ignore the fact that from the very beginning the Philippine Independence Act was approved by the U.S. Congress on March 24, 1934, Pub. L. No. 73–127, Section 2(a)(12), 48 Stat. 456, 457 all military forces organized by the Commonwealth Government of the Philippines in December 1935, became "reserves" army of the United States.

Evidence: In 1932, while the Philippine Islands was then a colony of the United States, Philippine leaders Sergio Osmena, Sr., and Manuel A. Roxas had secured the passage of Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act from the U.S. Congress, granting Philippine Independence.

Manuel L. Quezon, however, objected to the provisions contained in H.H.C. Law, granting the U.S. to establish military and naval bases on several sites such as Fort McKinley (which is now Fort Bonifacio), Cavite Naval Yard (Cavite City), Infantry Quarters in Intramuros, Hospital at Arroceros (Manila), Clark Field in Pampanga, and John Hay at Baguio City.

Mr. Quezon did not like such condition of the H.H.C. Law. What he wanted was an absolute independence without any U.S. military and navy bases to be established in the Philippines. In fact, during his feud with Governor General in Manila, Leonard Wood, he frankly commented, "I prefer a government run like hell by Filipinos to a government run like heaven by Americans, because no matter how bad Filipino government might be, it can be improved."

In 1934, Mr. Quezon went to Washington, DC and worked hard to get the approval of the Tydings-McDuffie Act. His primary mission in relation to the law, focused solely on a clear provisions of the Philippine Independence Act. He opposed the inclusion of military and other reservations in the provisions of the Philippine Independence Act. But this mission of Mr. Quezon was not acceptable to the United States.

A known nationalist, Mr. Quezon was aware that the United States will not agree with him, because in the 1930s, Japan's expansionist ambitions in Asia, through its Imperial forces, threatened Asian countries; that the Philippines under the American rule was strategically located and thus vital to the defense of the United States, and to avert the Japanese taking over the control of the Western Pacific Region; and because of the most popular sentiment of Filipinos, which was eventual Philippine Independence, the sooner the better, he agreed to the United States, and further continue on the matter after the Philippines became a self-governing nation. But the whole matter died with him in 1944.

After the two sides' agreement, the Philippine Independence Act was approved on March 24, 1934, Pub. L. No. 73–127, which contained two notable sections:

Section 10(a), 48 Stat. 456, 463 the Philippines became self-governing nation on July 4, 1946;

Section 2(a)(12), 48 Stat. 456, 457 which clearly showed that instead of only U.S. military and naval bases to be established in the Philippines, the U.S. Congress included various Philippine military organizations to be incorporated into the service of the U.S. Armed Forces.

The said section reads in relevant part:

"To maintain [United States] military and other reservations and armed forces in the Philippines and, upon order of the President to call into the service of the [United States] armed forces all military forces organized by the Philippine Government."

The phrase "upon order of the President" and the part of the provision that says "to call into the service of the [United States] armed forces all military forces organized by the Philippine Government" refer to the Philippine Army, already intended by the U.S. Congress to be a "reserves" army of the United States.

On July 26, 1941, President Roosevelt issued a military order calling members of these forces into the service of the United States Army Forces in the Far East [USAFFE]. The President's order stated in relevant part:

"[A]s Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States I hereby call and order into the service of the armed forces of the United States for the purpose of the existing emergency, and place under the command of a General Officer

United States Army . . . all of the organized military forces of the Government of the Philippines."

By President Roosevelt's July 26, 1941 Order, induction of the Philippine Army units into the United States Army Forces in the Far East was somewhat gradual, but was completed on December 8, 1941 and they were already formed parts of the U.S. Army during World War II until released therefrom on June 30, 1946, per military order of President Truman.

Treating the Philippine Army veterans differently before President Roosevelt called said army into the service of the United States Army became irrelevant once they were called into the armed forces of the United States, de facto command and control passed to the United States Army personnel fighting the same terms as member of the Armed Forces of the United States during World War II.

Therefore, at that point the original Philippine Army status was abrogated they were members of the Armed Forces of the United States. Under the fundamental law of the United States, all persons similarly circumstanced should be treated alike, or those similarly situated be treated similarly, and the Philippine Army, Recognized Guerrilla Fighters, and the New Philippine Scouts should receive the same rates of benefits as that received by American veterans.

Less amount of dollars in benefits to be awarded to the Filipino veterans would be a continuously humiliating and degrading treatment prohibited by the U.S. Constitution Amendments which directed the government to protect the veterans' rights and for them to be treated on the same basis as others with whom a person is similarly situated.

The foregoing statutory provisions and military order of President Roosevelt are the determinative issues here—repeat determinative—as supplied by rational basis for Congress approval of H.R. 760, the "Filipino Veterans Equity Act" of 2007.

May I add, with passionate emphasis and not afterthought, that the U.S. Army members on their return to civilian life were granted full benefits under the GI Bill of Rights. The Filipino veterans, on the other hand, returned home to a cruel punishment by an unjust first and second Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Acts of 1946.

Because the Commander-in-Chief of the Philippine Army 1946 accepted U.S. $200,000 from the United States on the condition that Philippine Army World War II service to the United States is not considered to be of service into the U.S. Army. Were you the Commander-in-Chief of your country can you do the same?

Thank you Mr. Chairman, this completes my statement.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LYNNE GUTIERREZ, PRESIDENT, OAHU FILIPINO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and distinguished Committee Members, as President of the Filipino Community Council (OFCC), I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony in overwhelming support of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. OFCC is composed of 62 member organizations on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. The Council's mission is to improve the quality of life for Hawaii's Filipinos, in order for our communities to make positive contributions in local, national and global arenas. Last year marked the centennial anniversary of the first Filipinos who immigrated to Hawaii. We are grateful that Filipinos have had the privilege to live, work, prosper, raise our families, serve in the U.S. military, and vote.

The Oahu Filipino Community Council strongly supports S. 57 and H.R. 760, as many Filipino World War II veterans and their family members are longtime Council members. OFCC passed a resolution to advocate for Filipino World War II veterans benefits at our statewide annual convention in June 2006. These proposed bills are integral to the social justice that has been kept from our aging Filipino WWII veterans, who have served in good faith alongside U.S. Armed Forces, yet had their veterans' benefits rescinded. We urge you to support passage of S. 57 and H.R. 760. Thank you for your service on the U.S. Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BEN DE GUZMAN, NATIONAL CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR, NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR FILIPINO VETERANS EQUITY (NAFVE)

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and Honorable Members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

I am the National Campaign Coordinator for the National Alliance for Filipino Veterans Equity (NAFVE). On behalf of NAFVE, I am honored to be able to submit this testimony to you today in strong support of S. 57, the Filipino Veterans Equity

Act. NAFVE is a coalition of local, national and international organizations and individuals committed to securing justice for Filipino World War II Veterans through restoration of U.S. Veterans status for purposes of benefits. All the groups have been part of a 60-year campaign to restore to Filipino WW II veterans their rightful claim to U.S. veterans status and recognition for their bravery in defending the United States.

Since the S. 57 has been introduced in the Senate along with its sister bill, H.R. 760 in the House of Representatives, NAFVE has been working tirelessly in partnership with its member organizations, allies and other leaders in the community to raise awareness of the plight of Filipino World War II Veterans in light of their ongoing exclusion from the benefits promised to them by the United States Government, then unceremoniously stripped from them by the 1946 Rescission Act.

Working with countless individuals and organizations around the country, we have discovered several encouraging findings:

(1) The Filipino American Community's Groundswell of Support: The approximately 2 million Filipino Americans in this country have rallied behind this issue as their key political issue for this year. We know that having waited 61 years for restoration of the honor and dignity of our veterans is far too long and the community has mobilized itself as never before.

(2) April 9 and the Day of Valor: Attached for your review at the conclusion of this testimony, please find a list of events around the country that commemorate April 9 as Day of Valor. This year marks the 65th anniversary of the fall of Bataan on that day and the subsequent infamous Bataan Death March. Day of Valor ceremonies around the country not only honor the brave service and commitment of ALL of our veterans who fought in World War II, but also give rise to the community's support of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

(3) Support from our Friends: As we speak with more and more people who are not familiar with this issue, we gain more converts to our cause and more support for this bill. Attached for your review at the conclusion of this testimony, please find a letter that has been circulated around the country which includes support from an incredibly diverse cross-section of the community, Filipino, and non-Filipino alike. Their collective voices join ours in calling for passage of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

We are excited about the increasing support for this issue and hope that your Committee follows this momentum and helps move this bill forward to final passage. Our veterans have waited too long.

Information about our Alliance is also included below. Thank you again for allowing NAFVE the opportunity to play a role in your deliberations on this important bill.

[Letter in support of the Filipino Veterans Equity bill follows:]

DEAR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: We, the undersigned individuals and organizations, strongly urge you to support H.R. 760/S. 57, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. During World War II, Filipino Veterans fought bravely for the United States in the Pacific theater, only to have their eligibility for full benefits revoked by Congress through the Rescission Act of 1946. For decades, Filipino Veterans have been fighting this injustice, and as they enter their twilight years, are now dying with dreams deferred and promises unfulfilled. The Filipino Veterans Equity Act will restore justice for these veterans, who fought and sacrificed for freedom and liberty.

While the U.S. Government has taken steps to restore some health care benefits to the veterans in recent years, full equity has not yet been achieved. Many of the veterans are now in their 80's, and too many of their comrades have already died without receiving the benefits they deserve.

H.R. 760/S. 57 will amend current law to consider the service of eligible Filipino Veterans who fought in World War II to be active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

H.R. 760/S. 57 will undo the injustice committed against the Filipino Veterans through the 1946 Rescission Act, which denied these brave soldiers appropriate recompense for their duty.

H.R. 760/S. 57 will allow these veterans to spend their golden years enjoying the fruits of their sacrifices for freedom and liberty, instead of fighting the very government they fought for in World War II.

We need your help now to provide justice to our Filipino Veterans who fought bravely under the U.S. flag as part of the "Greatest Generation." We turn to you to help undo decades old injustice done to those who have served our country most bravely. Your support of H.R. 760 will help close the book on a shameful chapter

of our nation's history, and will honor the military service of veterans who have been waiting for over sixty years for this recognition. Please help us pass H.R. 760.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, Washington, DC
Asian American Institute, Chicago, IL
Asian American Justice Center, Washington, DC
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL–CIO, Washington, DC
Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum, Washington, DC
Hmong National Development, Washington, DC
Japanese American Citizens League, Washington, DC
Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Los Angeles, CA
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association, Denver, CO
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, Washington, DC
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, Washington, DC
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, Washington, DC
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium
Southeast Asian Resource Action Center, Washington, DC
National Assn of Sons & Daughters of FilAm World War II Veterans USA, Seattle, WA
National Network for Veterans Equity (NNVE), San Francisco, CA
National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA), Washington, DC

Local Organizations

Filipino World War II Veterans Federation of San Diego County, San Diego, CA
Filipino American Support Group Inc. (FASGI), Los Angeles, CA
Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Los Angeles, CA
Veterans Equity Center (VEC), San Francisco, CA
Erasto Batongmalaque Foundation, Inc. (ERBF), Los Angeles, CA
Federation of Filipino American Associations, Inc. (FFAAI), Los Angeles, CA
FilAm Community of Los Angeles (FACLA), Los Angeles, CA
Filipino American Veterans & Families, Inc (FAFVI), San Francisco, CA
Filipino Civil Rights Advocates (FilCRA), Oakland, CA
National Federation of Filipino American Associations, Region 5, Broomfield, CO
Asian Gold, Broomfield, CO
Filipino-American Community of Colorado, Brighton, CO
Philippine Nurses Association, Broomfield, CO
Aurora Asian Partnership, Aurora, CO
Philippine American Society of Colorado, Parker, CO
Asian Gold, Westminster, CO
Asian Roundtable of Colorado, Aurora, CO
Uplift Internationale, Littleton, CO
Aurora Asian Partnership, Aurora, CO
University of the Philippines Alumni Association, Colorado Chapter, Aurora, CO
ANCOP Foundation USA, Colorado Chapter, Aurora, CO
Fil-Am Veterans Society, Inc. of Jacksonville, Florida (FASI), Jacksonville, FL
Illinois Veterans Equity Center (IVEC), Chicago, IL
Filipino American Democrats of South New Jersey, Cherry Hill, NJ
Philippine Nurses Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Cherry Hill, NJ
AALDEF, New York, NY
Filipino American Republicans of Virginia (FARV), Alexandria, VA
Filipino American Veterans of Hampton Roads (FAVHR), Virginia Beach, VA
Filipino Intercollegiate Networking Dialogue (FIND), Fairfax, VA
Filipino War Veterans of Washington (FWVW), Seattle, WA
Bataan & Corregidor Survivors Assn & their Families (BCSA&TF), Seattle, WA
KAC–DC, Washington, DC

Individuals

Ben Cayatano, Former Governor of Hawaii
Mark Pulido, ABC School Board
Armin Reyes, ABC School Board
Chris Cabaldon, Mayor of West Sacramento
Elito M. Santarina, City Councilman of Carson, CA, Mayor Pro Tempore
Robert Bunda, Hawaii State Senator
Will Espero, Hawaii State Senator
Lorraine R. Inouye, Hawaii State Senator

Ron Menor, Hawaii State Senator
Kris Valderrama, Maryland House of Delegates
Velma Veloria, Former Washington State Assembly Member
Ferdinand Tolentino, Former Board Member Virginia Beach Public Schools
John Amores, West Virginia House of Delegates

The Hawaii State House of Representatives Filipino Caucus

Chair Rep. Michael Magaoay
Rep. Della Au Belatt
Rep. Lyla B. Berg Ph.D
Rep. Rida T. R. Cabanilla
Rep. Jerry L. Chang
Rep. Corinne W. L. Chin
Rep. Lynn Finnegan
Rep. Robert N. Herkes
Rep. Jon Riki Karamatsu
Rep. Joey Manahan
Rep. John Mizuno
Rep. Kymberly Marcos Pine
Rep. Karl Rhoads
Rep. Roland D. Sagum III
Rep. Alex M. Sonson
Rep. James Kunane Tokioka
Rep. Clift Tsuji
Rep. Glenn Wakai

Lisa Mamangon	AZ	85243
Salvador I. Lopez	AZ	85009
Stacey Castor	AZ	85281
Danielle Tejada	AZ	85226
Alejandra Hernandez	AZ	85041
Kristin Reynante	AZ	85224
Melanie Garcia	AZ	85044
Angelie Meehan	AZ	85041
Louie Depante	CA	91326
Benjamin DeGuzman	CA	90019
Benita Benavides	CA	94577
Evelyn Bernardo	CA	92672
Meleilani Barnes	CA	92115
Ellen Y. Gomez	CA	91381
Mayumi Santiago-Shupe	CA	95835
Jose Angelo R. Benavides	CA	94577
Donna LaVigne	CO	Broomfield
Romeo Magalong	CO	Lakewood
Giselle Rushford	CO	Westminster
Edith Pasion	CO	Aurora
Arthur & Joy Meyers	CO	Denver
Elbert Eloriaga	CO	Parker
Gloria Williams	CO	Aurora
Jaime Yrastorza, DMD	CO	Littleton
Nestor & Elnora Mercado	CO	Denver
Joseph Noli Lopez	CO	Parker
Malou Mateo Stirman	CO	Brighton
Felino Paran	CO	Aurora
Bart & Marlene Perez	CO	Aurora
Raymond Teodoro	CT	6450
Elizabeth Kim	DC	20009
Toni Daya-Luetgers	GA	30075
Marilyn Z. O. Doromal	GA	31906
Sarah Hawk	GA	30309
Onofre R. Paguio	GA	30604

S Beltran	IL	60618
Maricor Lacaya	IL	60465
Angelito Santos	MA	2375
Adelamar Alcantara	NM	87105
Theodore S. Jojola	NM	87109
Rey Antonio	NV	89110
Lilia Ledesma	NY	10950
Mary Ann Pearson	NY	10022
Grace Rodriguez	TX	77478
Derick Mendoza	TX	77082
Belle Quisel-Sibug	TX	77099
Bobby Reyes	TX	77536
Andrew B. Dompao	TX	77477
Florencio Guinhawa	TX	77083
Cesar M. Naguit	TX	77581
Arsenio R. Martin	TX	77642
AJ Rosario, M.D., M.P.H.	TX	77584
Tess Tuazon	TX	77042
Norma Benzon	TX	77479
Meredith Benzon	TX	77479
Honesto	TX	77479
Gary Ilagan	TX	77056
Robert Pucio	TX	77478
Lope G. Lindio	TX	77036
Napoleon Ramirez	TX	76123
Jessie del Mundo	TX	77459
Bill Encarnacion	TX	77478
Celia Vasquez	TX	77056
Cyril Maza	TX	77082
Lina Umali	TX	77055
Phoebe D. Catli	TX	77071
Arlene Machetta	TX	77068
Samuel Catli	TX	77071
Mendel Cheng	TX	77062
Ben Ongoco	TX	77080
Wally C. Arias	TX	77478
Travis Millard	TX	77478
Paige Perez	TX	77478
Ave Basa	TX	77489
Cornelia G. Emboy	TX	77083
Carlo Rodriguez	TX	77478
Luz Rodriguez	TX	77478
Daniel Jones	TX	77027
James ''Face'' Yu	TX	78747
Victoria Ma	TX	77077
Rolando Ulanday	TX	77082
Myrna Saludares	TX	77075
Renato Famatigan	TX	79922
Mamta Accapadi	TX	78727
Leo Dela Rosa	TX	77478
Jerome Redor	TX	77030
Marc Pedregosa	TX	77584
Bobby Ilagan	TX	77083
Kathleen Ulanday	TX	77478
Dan Diaz	TX	77505
Ernie Azucena	TX	77015
Irwin	TX	78759
Federico Villamayor	TX	77003
Imelda Malapitan	TX	77055

Sam Barzilla	TX	78713
Alex Estatis	TX	77477
Nanette Lacsamana	TX	77478
Munir Ibrahim	TX	77024
Janella Gee	TX	77025
Patrick Nguyen	TX	77075
Maria Theresa Mangahis	TX	77478
Jason Redor	TX	77055
Ninfa Alcantara	TX	77478
James A. Harris, Jr.	TX	78729
Angela L. Lee	TX	77036
Daniel Mee	TX	77098
Ellen L. Aguilar	TX	77546
James Yu	TX	77008
Elsie Gaid	TX	77584
Steven M DiMatteo	TX	77027
Regine M Biscoe	VA	Vienna
Sheena Black	VA	Vienna
Andrew Lee	VA	Vienna
Gem Daus	VA	lexandria
Marietta Basnillo	WA	99223
Annabel Garcia-Andresen	WA	Seattle
Third Andresen	WA	Seattle

APRIL 9, THE DAY OF VALOR

April 9, 2007 marks the 65th Anniversary of the Fall of Bataan in the Philippines during World War II. On April 9, 1946, Maj. Gen. Edward "Ned" King formally surrendered to the Japanese army. Following the surrender, over 11,000 Americans and 66,000 Filipinos were relocated from Mariveles in Bataan to Camp O' Donnell in Tarlac. The brave soldiers who were forced to march suffered brutally over the course of the over 30 mile trek. This would go down in infamy as the "Bataan Death March," and still stands as one of the historical milestones of the war.

Today, April 9 is celebrated as a national holiday in the Philippines as *Araw ng Kagitingan*, or the "Day of Valor." In the United States, Filipino American communities recognize the Day of Valor and take the opportunity not only to pay respect to the service and sacrifice of American and Filipino soldiers who fought, but to also raise awareness of the current plight of Filipino veterans, whose status as U.S. veterans was unceremoniously stripped from them by the 1946 Rescission Act.

Around the country, local communities are celebrating the Day of Valor this year by showing their support for the the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. This bill has been introduced in Congress to remedy the injustice of the Rescission Act and reaffirm America's commitment to all who fought for the United States in WWII as part of "the Greatest Generation."

In Washington, DC, the National Alliance for Filipino Veterans Equity (NAFVE) will join this groundswell of support as it takes part in an historic hearing on this bill before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. Partnering with its members around the country, NAFVE will take the message of support and solidarity directly to Capitol Hill.

LIST OF NAFVE MEMBER SPONSORED EVENTS TO COMMEMORATE THE DAY OF VALOR

Current information for events as of April 6, 2007.

San Diego, CA

Event: "Remember Bataan Candlelight Vigil"; Time: April 9, 7 p.m.; Location: 1243 National City Boulevard (In front of National City's City Hall); Contact: Joann Fields

Los Angeles, CA

Event: 65th Anniversary of the Day of Valor: "Remember Bataan and Corregidor"; Time: April 9, 10 a.m.; Location: Filipino American World War II Memorial, Lake

Street Park, Los Angeles, CA; Sponsors: E.R. Batongmalaque Foundation Historical Society, Filipino Veterans Foundation, Veterans Center Association; Contact: Dr. Jenny Batongmalaque

San Frencisco, CA

Event: Candlelight Vigil: "Remember Bataan"; Time: April 9, 5:30 p.m.; Location: City Hall San Francisco, CA; Sponsors: Veterans Equity Center, SAVE, others; Contact: Angelica, SAVE

Washington, DC

Event: Wreath-Laying; Time: April 10, 5:30 p.m.; Location: World War II Memorial Washington, DC; Sponsors: Philippine Embassy, NAFVE, American Coalition for Filipino Veterans; Contact: Del Lorenzano

Atlanta, GA

Event: Bataan Day Commemoration: Honoring Filipino Veterans, "The Unforgotten Heroes"; Time: April 7, 3p.m.; Location: Morrow Presbyterian Church, Morrow, GA; Sponsors: NaFFAA-Southern Region, Philippine Consulate General Office, Atlanta, GA, others; Contact: Marilyn Doromal

Honolulu, HI

Event: *Balik-Tanaw*: Remembering Bataan and Corregidor; Time: April 15, 1 p.m.; Location: Filipino Community Center Waipahu, HI; Sponsors: Philippine Celebrations Coordinating Committee of Hawai'i, Consulate General of the Philippines; Contact: Nic Musico

Chicago, IL

Event: 65th Commemoration of Bataan Day; Time: April 9, 9:30 a.m.; Location: Bataan-Corregidor Memorial Bridge (corner of State Street and Wacker Drive); Sponsors: Philippine Consulate General (Chicago, IL), Mayor's Office, Commission on Human Relations, Advisory Council on Veterans Affairs, Illinois Veterans Equity Center, others; Contact: Jerry Clarito

Cherry Hill, NJ

Event: Commemoration of the 65th Anniversary of the Fall of Bataan; Time: April 9, 6:30 p.m.; Location: Bataan Death March Memorial/Rizal Monument Cooper Park, Cherry Hill, NJ; Sponsors: VFW Pvt. Tomas Post 1063 and Ladies Auxiliary, Filipino Executive Council of Greater Philadelphia, American Legion Gen. Alejo Santos Post 717 and Ladies Auxiliary; Contacts: Senten Fontanilla/ Lambert Santos

Albuquerque, NM

Event: Bataan Day Commemoration; Time: March 31; Location: Albuquerque, NM; Sponsors: NaFFAA-NM, others; Contact: Dely Alcantara

Houston, TX

Event: Bataan Day Rally; Time: April 21, 2 p.m.; Location: Veterans Administration Auditorium, Houston, TX; Sponsors: NaFFAA, FACOST, others; Contact: Wally Arias

Virginia Beach, VA

Event: Vigil for Day of Valor; Time: April 9, nightfall (7:30 p.m.); Location: Veterans Memorial Garden, Philippine Cultural Center Virginia Beach, VA; Sponsors: Filipino American Veterans of Hampton Roads, Student Action for Veterans Equity (SAVE), NaFFAA-Capitol Region, others; Contact: Romy San Antonio, President

About the National Alliance for Filipino Veterans Equity

The National Alliance for Filipino World War II Veterans Equity is a coalition of local, national and international organizations and individuals committed to securing justice for Filipino World War II Veterans through restoration of U.S. Veterans status for purposes of benefits. All the groups have been part of a 60–year campaign to restore to Filipino WW II veterans their rightful claim to U.S. veterans status and recognition for their bravery in defending the United States during WWII. The National Alliance's sole purpose is to pass the long overdue Filipino World War II Veterans Equity Act in the 110th Congress.

The National Alliance formed in December 2006 at a meeting of over 60 participants including leaders from around the United States and the Philippines who have been working on issues of concern to the Filipino American and Filipino Veterans communities for decades. At the meeting, participants agreed that with champions of the Filipino Veterans in key positions of leadership in both houses of Con-

gress, the time was right to secure final passage of the Filipino World War II Veterans Equity Act.

The National Alliance is currently working to pass the Filipino World War II Veterans Equity Act in the 110th Congress. With a national, coordinated structure and a dedicated team of seasoned political professionals working in Washington, DC, the Alliance represents the most broad-based and well-funded effort to secure justice for Filipino World War II Veterans to date.

Current List of Alliance Members

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA)
Bataan & Corregidor Survivors Assn & their Families (BCSA&TF), Seattle
Embassy of the Philippines
Erasto Batongmalaque Foundation, Inc. (ERBF), Los Angeles
Federation of Filipino American Associations, Inc. (FFAAI)
FilAm Community of Los Angeles (FACLA)
Filipino American Democrats of South New Jersey Filipino American Republicans of Virginia (FARV)
Fil-Am Veterans Society, Inc. of Jacksonville, Florida (FASI)
Filipino American Support Group Inc. (FASGI), Los Angeles, CA
Filipino American Veterans of Hampton Roads (FAVHR), VA
Filipino American Veterans & Families, Inc (FAFVI), San Francisco, CA
Filipino Civil Rights Advocates (FilCRA)
Filipino Intercollegiate Networking Dialogue (FIND)
Filipino War Veterans of Washington (FWVW),
Seattle Filipino World War II Veterans Federation of San Diego County
Illinois Veterans Equity Center (IVEC)
National Assn of Sons & Daughters of FilAm World War II Veterans USA
National Network for Veterans Equity (NNVE)
National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA)
Philippine Nurses Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey
Veterans Equity Center (VEC), San Francisco
Veterans Federation of the Philippines (VFP)
Filipino American National Historical Society-East Bay
National Association of Filipino American United Methodists (NAFAUM)

Alliance Leadership

Co-Chairs

Jon Melegrito, NaFFAA
Lilian Galedo, NNVE

Steering Committee

Alma Kern, NaFFAA (National)
Ernie Ramos, NaFFAA (NaFFAA Southwest Region)
Rozita Lee, NaFFAA (Nevada Region)
Perry Diaz, National Federation of Filipino American Republicans
Lou Tancinco, NNVE
Luisa Antonio, NNVE
Jerry Clarito, Illinois Veterans Equity Center
Romy Monteyro, San Diego Veterans
Jenny Batongmalaque, Los Angeles Veterans
Susan Dilkes, FASGI, Los Angeles
Gloria Caoile, Treasurer
Lisa Yuchengco, Fundraising Committee

Legislative Team

Irene Bueno, Legislative Adviser
Charmaine Manansala, Policy Adviser
Ben de Guzman, National Campaign Coordinator
Vida Benavides, Campaign Adviser

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARGARITA HOPKINS, PRESIDENT, AND SERAFIN COLMENARES, JR., VICE PRESIDENT, CONGRESS OF VISAYAN ORGANIZATIONS

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and distinguished Committee Members, as President and Vice President of the Congress of Visayan Organizations (COVO), we thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony in

unanimous support of the Filipino Veterans' Equity Act 2007. COVO is a statewide umbrella organization representing 22 unit organizations of Visayan ancestry in Hawaii.

For years, COVO has been a staunch advocate of Filipino veterans' equity to make right a broken promise that was rescinded in 1946 by an act of Congress. Taken away or gravely limited were veterans' benefits that included family reunification, health care, veterans burial rights, and more that were afforded to all World War II allied troops except from the Philippines.

COVO's commitment to advocacy for our Filipino veterans is rooted in the spirit of social justice set by Visayan native chief Lapu-Lapu, who is recognized as the first Filipino national hero for subduing the conquistador Ferdinand Magellan in the Battle of Mactan on April 27, 1521.

In 2007, one year after the Filipino centennial anniversary of the first arrival of Filipinos to Hawaii, the fate of Filipino veterans is awaiting another act of Congress. COVO looks to your leadership and moral values to pass the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, to recognize the sacrifice and contributions to Americans in a time of war, and to reinstate veterans' benefits. COVO extends our gratitude to your public service to the American people.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NIC G. MUSICO, ADVISER, WWII FIL-AM VETERANS AND LADIES AUXILIARY, HAWAII CHAPTER

Aloha, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is Nic Musico, a naturalized American citizen and resident of Honolulu, Hawaii for over 35 years. I am one of the advisers of the WWII Fil-Am Veterans and Ladies Auxiliary Hawaii Chapter.

I testify in support of S. 57, also known as the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007.

When the Filipino veterans arrived en masse in 1992 to take advantage of the Immigration Act of 1990, I managed shelters to temporarily house them. We fed between 80 to 100 veterans every day for one year. The Hawaii community did an excellent job providing food, transportation, transitional housing, and monetary support. That year, the Honolulu Immigration and Naturalization office processed about 6,000 veterans to become American citizens who made Hawaii, for majority of them, their new home.

Now, fifteen years later, and many of them gone, I still see them with great need. Many are here alone, away from their family who are in the Philippines. It is a very sad situation, but they maintained this lifestyle hoping that someday they will be reunited with their family.

Many veterans are on Supplemental Security Income (SSI). They are of course very grateful for this financial aid program, but when they are able to save some money to visit their family in the Philippines, they stay there for no more than 28 days because if they stayed longer, they would be required to reapply for SSI when they return to Hawaii. It does not seem to be a friendly program because when they reapply, they worry whether they would be disqualified from the SSI program or penalized. Mostly in their early or late eighties with no immediate or extended family members who can assist them, they find it very difficult to navigate the system of public assistance or deal with government red tape.

Hawaii has one of the highest standards of living in the country. These veterans came here to avail of American citizenship but unknowingly placed themselves in a tough predicament. In 1992, their average age was 70. At this age, what chances would they have to buy a house or a car? What chances would they have to find a good job? The chances naturally are very little because at their age, they should be enjoying retirement. Who would hire a 70-year-old person with no experience?

But these veterans are very resilient people. A few of them hold part time jobs as security guards. Some collect empty bottles and cans for redemption at recycling centers. Some do vegetable gardening. Some queue at various food bank locations. They are engaged in these activities to supplement their SSI. It is rather funny that they have to supplement their supplemental income.

These veterans have learned to minimize their expenses. They buy monthly bus passes to use public transportation. They use "handi-vans" to bring them to hospital, clinic, or doctor. They wake up early to go to "flea market" to buy discounted goods and fresh vegetables. They patronize discount stores and watch for sales.

They have also learned to socially, psychologically, and financially support each other. When someone among them dies, they collect donations for burial services, attend funeral services, conduct group prayers, and comfort each other. They orga-

nize events to keep themselves busy and occupied. They share information, particularly those that directly affect them.

Life for the aging Filipino WWII veterans in this country whose freedom they helped preserve for all Americans to enjoy is a mixed blessing. They have been given the opportunity to pledge allegiance to the United States flag under which they served during the war, but they have not been given the full rights and benefits accorded to other war veterans who served under it. There is something morally wrong about this. This is a grave injustice that the U.S. Congress must rectify NOW!

I strongly urge this honorable Committee to pass S. 57, the Filipino Equity Act of 2007.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF EMMANUEL V. DE OCAMPO, PRESIDENT, VETERANS FEDERATION OF THE PHILIPPINES

World War II in the Philippines started on December 8, 1941 and ended on September 3, 1945.

The contributions of the Filipino soldiers to the war effort of the United Sates of America during World War II are documented in official records and have been adequately presented in newspapers, magazines, books and even in movies.

The Veterans Federation of the Philippines seeks the full recognition by the United States Government of the military service rendered within the period from December 8, 1941 to September 3, 1945 by persons, of any nationality, in the regular army units of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and in the Philippine guerrilla organizations recognized by the United States Army as military service to the United States of America for all intents and purposes.

The Veterans Federation of the Philippines supports and thanks the proponents of any measure toward that end.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TESSIE OCULTO, PRESIDENT, PHILIPPINE NURSES ASSOCIATION-HAWAII

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and distinguished Committee Members, as President of the Philippine Nurses Association-Hawaii, I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony in undivided support of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

Philippine Nurses Association-Hawaii represents over 70 registered nurses. As a national affiliate of the Philippine Nurses Association of America, our shared mission is to uphold and foster the positive image and welfare of our constituent members; to promote professional excellence, and to contribute to significant outcomes to healthcare and society.

We strongly support S. 57 and H.R. 760 to reinstate veterans' benefits, which the U.S. Congress unfairly rescinded in 1946. As health care providers, we see that this policy resulted in the lack of access to health care and much more for our Filipino veterans. The 110th Congress has the opportunity to correct this unfortunate racist policy, which has no place in an America that is based on the premise of equality for all. We respectfully ask for your support to champion the passage of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. Thank you for your commitment to social justice and for your dedication to public service.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BEATRICE RAMOS-RAZON PRESIDENT, NURSING ADVOCATES AND MENTORS, INC.

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and distinguished Committee Members, as President of the Nursing Advocates and Mentors, Inc. (NAMI), I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony in strong support of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act. NAMI's membership is comprised of over 75 nurse, allied health care professionals, and Filipino leaders, who are dedicated to improve the health of Hawaii's people by addressing the global issues of a worldwide nursing shortage through the training and mentoring of foreign medical graduate nurses to pass Hawaii's nurses board exams.

NAMI is in full support of S. 57 and H.R. 760 with all of its provisions. Our Filipino World War II veterans have endured and survived compounding life hardships, in spite of having their veterans' benefits rescinded by the U.S. Congress in 1946. As experienced gerontology practitioners and skilled nursing facilities or care home

administrators, NAMI nurses are keenly aware of the predicament faced by our aging Filipino veterans. As young men, they put themselves in harm's way to defend Americans, but now in their twilight years, they cannot avail of veterans' benefits.

NAMI urges you to please support the passage these important bills.

STATE OF HAWAII, EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS,
Honolulu, HI, April 10, 2007.

Hon. DANIEL AKAKA,
Chairman, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Prince Kuhio Federal Building,
Honolulu, HI.

DEAR SENATOR AKAKA: I am asking for your support of S. 57, Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007. It is extremely important your Veterans Committee move the bill out so the full senate may vote on the measure. This bill will grant the children of Filipino World War II veterans a special immigration status. This status would reunite these children with naturalized Filipino WWII veterans already residing in the United States.

In 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt drafted over 250,000 Filipino citizens into the United States Armed Forces. Under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, Filipino soldiers fought valiantly alongside American soldiers in defense of freedom.

The 1990 Immigration Act allowed these Filipino veterans the opportunity to obtain U.S. citizenship. However, the legislation did not extend to their adult children, many who have been on immigration waiting lists for an extended number of years. Current estimates place over 47,000 of these WWII Filipino veterans residing in America, many of them here in Hawaii.

The Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007 will expedite visa issuance for the children of these surviving veterans by excluding them from numerical categorial limits. This would allow the reunification of these families, especially with many Filipino veterans now in their eighties.

It is my hope that passage of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007 will continue America's tradition of recognizing the sacrifices made by our veterans so many years ago and reward them with the opportunity to bring their children to our great country.

Sincerely,

LINDA LINGLE,
Governor.

CITY OF LOS ANGELES,
THIRTEENTH COUNCIL DISTRICT,
APRIL 11, 2007.

This letter is to inform you of my support for the passage of Filipino WWII Veterans Equity Act. Today can be one of many steps to correct the wrong that was done in the past.

I represent Los Angeles, the District with the highest concentration of Filipino American Veterans in the city. I can attest to the many Filipino Veterans who have called our office who need assistance in housing because they can no longer afford their rent with the small income they receive each month. These men need our help. They deserve our help.

Last Veterans Day 2006, I joined the many Filipino American Veterans in the United States in unveiling a Filipino Veterans Memorial, the first of its kind in the nation. This is but a small token to the brave men that contributed to the war efforts of the United States during World War II and their struggle for veteran recognition, equity, and justice.

Although the Federal Government has yet to fully recognize the Filipino Veterans, at least the city of Los Angeles did our part with this memorial. Likewise, just this month, I introduced a resolution that the City Council of Los Angeles unanimously passed in support of the passage of H.R. 760 and S. 57.

For many years, these Veterans have staged hunger strikes, protested here in Los Angeles, at Sacramento, and at Washington DC, chained themselves to the White House, and lobbied their elected officials; all to regain what they deserve: Full Equity and Justice. The United States Government has the obligation to take care of

those who defend the country. Please do not overlook the vital role Filipino soldiers played during WWII.

ERIC GARCETTI,
Councilman, Thirteenth Council District,
City of Los Angeles.

DEAR CHAIRMAN AKAKA AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: My name is Wilfreda Tungol, a resident of Hawaii and a retired U.S. Army Reserve Officer. I am submitting this testimony in support of S.B. 57 entitled Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007. I would have preferred to give this testimony in person, but given the circumstance of timing and distance, I respectfully submit it in writing for the record. If time permits, I request that one of your staff members read it aloud for the whole Committee.

The Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007 will finally correct the miscarriage of justice suffered by thousands of Filipino veterans who risked their lives in fighting for our country in the Philippines during World War II. The bill will enable them to have their service in the organized military forces of the then Commonwealth of the Philippines and in the Philippine Scouts equally recognized as services rendered in the United States Army. Some of the surviving veterans are now into their 80's. More than two thousand live in Hawaii. Most of them live alone because they cannot bring their immediate relatives under the current immigration laws. Most of them suffer financial hardships because they are not eligible for service connected benefits as a result of their service during World War II in the regular Philippine Army or the Philippine Scouts. Each time I see one of these Filipino veterans, I am reminded of my two uncles who fought alongside the regular U.S. Army during the war and who both made the ultimate sacrifice fighting for our country.

One of my two uncles (Jesus Tungol) was a member of the U.S. Armed Forces of the Far East (USAFFE), and the other (Manuel Tungol) was a member of the Philippine Scouts. According to my grandmother, Manuel died fighting the Japanese Army in Intramuros, Manila while Jesus during a battle in Bataan. My grandmother was one of the survivor beneficiaries of Jesus' death as a result of his service before the law was changed in 1947 whereby veterans who served in either organization was excluded from receiving benefits or their beneficiaries in the event that they were killed during the war. The Filipino veterans would have been entitled to receive service connected disability benefits as well as other benefits if the laws have not been changed. Their loved ones would have been entitled to survivors' benefits if they made the ultimate sacrifice. Instead, the surviving Filipino veterans have had to wait for over three generations before they can rightfully receive what they are entitled to.

Each passing week, a Filipino veteran dies in our country, without having received what they were entitled to for serving their country. They die alone, in poverty, and in distraught becasue they were left behind. While they have been given partial benefits by allowing them to come to this country, and be buried in veterans' cemeteries, the more substantial benefits such as medical and monetary pensions have not been accorded to them.

I urge the Members of this Committee to do the right and honorable thing and to do everything in its power for the passage of this bill in the soonest possible time given the urgency of the time that is left for the surviving Filipino veterans.

Mahalo and Aloha.

LTC WILFREDO TUNGKOL,
U.S. Army, Retired.

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN LEGAL CENTER
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA,
Los Angeles, California.

DEAR CHAIRMAN AKAKA AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: On behalf of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, we are writing to support the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, which would restore veteran status for Filipino WWII veterans, making them eligible for the veteran benefits they deserve and reversing an injustice they have suffered for over 60 years.

Founded in 1983, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for civil rights, providing legal services and education, and building coalitions to positively influence and impact Asian Pacific Americans and to create a more equitable and harmonious society. APALC is affili-

ated with the Asian American Justice Center (formerly NAPALC) in Washington, DC.

Filipino Americans are the second largest Asian American community, and California has the largest Filipino American population of any state in the country by far. Almost half of the nation's Filipino Americans live in California, home to approximately 1.1 million Filipino Americans. For over twenty years, APALC has worked with and advocated for the Filipino American community in Southern California, and we can assure you that the plight of the Filipino WWII veterans is very important to this sizable community.

Filipino WWII veterans have waited for over 60 years for Congress to correct the historical injustice that took place in 1946. From 1941 to 1945, over 200,000 Filipinos fought and died as American nationals under the American flag and under the direction of U.S. military leaders. Despite their service, the Rescission Act of 1946 stripped these veterans of both the ability to become U.S. citizens and the rights and benefits given to all other World War II veterans. Today, fewer than 20,000 Filipino WWII veterans remain, and they are dying at the rate of ten a day.

The plight of these veterans is particularly acute here in California. In 1990, Filipino WWII veterans were finally given the opportunity to obtain U.S. citizenship, and thousands of them moved to California to spend their remaining years in the U.S. These veterans, however, soon found themselves separated from the daily interaction and support of family members due to quotas in issuing visas to adult children of U.S. citizens.

Separated from family, many of these veterans experience financial difficulties, health problems, and loneliness. Some do not meet the income level required to petition to have their family join them in the U.S. A survey of 404 veterans in Northern and Southern California, conducted by the Filipino American Service Group, Inc.'s (FASGI) Filipino Veterans Health Project, found 84 percent of the veterans reporting health problems, 75 percent suffering from loneliness and 3 percent contemplating suicide.

The Filipino Veterans Equity Act would provide these remaining Filipino WWII veterans with the recognition and status they deserve and pensions they need. After 60 years, this bill is a measure of compassion for aging veterans, many of whom are approaching their last days.

APALC strongly urges Congress to support the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, and we thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully yours,

STEWART KWOH,
President and Executive Director.

DANIEL HUANG,
Policy Advocate, Immigration and Citizenship Project.

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